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The Ace of Spades: OR, IOLA, THE STREET SWEEPER.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

CHAPTER I. THE DARK ANGEL.

"On the night of September 20th, 1852, a violent storm swept over the great city of New York. It was the beginning of the 'line gale'—that storm so terrible in its nature, so destructive to human life along our northern rock-bound coast.

The rain poured in torrents upon the ever-dirty streets of the Great Metropolis; the thunder rolled in heavy peals along the heavens, and the lightning flashed its vivid fires over the rooftops and in the almost deserted streets.

The lights flashing from the windows upon the gloom of the night—for it was scarcely nine, and the denizens of the great city do not retire early—seemed to mock the storm that raged so terribly without.

Regardless of the storm, come with us, dear reader. We will take our way—not to Fifth avenue, the abode of gilded luxury and oft of festering crime—but to Forsyth street, the home of the sons of toil, the honest middle classes, the pillars and bulwarks of our Republic.

We stop before a building six stories in height; the lights are flashing from every window; all give signs of occupation and of life. This building is a tenement-house, each floor of which is occupied by two or more families—sometimes the occupants, whose families are small, will turn an honest penny by sub-letting a room.

We will leave the storm and gloom and enter the house. Ascending the stairs, we will enter the first door we come to on the landing.

We find a small kitchen, ill-furnished. Although winter is fast approaching, there is no stove in the open fire-place; nothing but a small round furnace for burning charcoal, fit only for preparing food.

Another glance around the room, and that glance tells us that we are in the abode of death—of death surrounded by misery.

Upon a torn and squalid bed lies the lifeless form of a woman—not old, but young, although the sunken cheeks, the pallid face and the wide-open, straining, staring eyes give her a look of age far beyond her years.

By the side of the dead woman nestles a babe scarcely a year old. The child sleeps soundly by the side of its dead mother; not old enough to comprehend its loss.

The little room has one other occupant, a boy some twelve years of age; although his features—like his parent's, now lying lifeless upon the floor—being pinched by want make him seem much

older. The story of this little family, whose mother has been stricken down by the bolt of the Dark Angel, is but the oft-told tale.

A village mechanic, with his wife and boy, forsakes his happy country home, and enters the whirl and bustle of the great metropolis. Years pass on, the simple countryman, unused to the snares of the world, falls an easy prey to the wiles that beset him on every side. He becomes a drunkard, neglects his work; step by step he goes down the ladder of degradation, until, at last, he yields up his life to a stab inflicted by one of those ruffians of the knife who haunt the low liquor-saloons of New York. He dies, leaving his wife with two children—a son of eleven and an infant barely a year old—to fight her way through the world. Brave, true little woman that she was, she did not shrink from the task. She took in washing, went out sewing, and so fought the wolf from the door. Furnishing the front room of her apartments as well as she was able, she succeeded in letting it to a young lady—a music-teacher, so she said—for enough to pay all her rent. Her boy took to selling papers, and, being naturally a sharp, active lad, he contributed considerably to the support of the household.

It was a hard struggle for the poor little woman, and at last she sickened and died, leaving her two children to the cold mercies of the world.

Thus it is, that on the night of September 20th, while the storm howled and raged without, Daniel Catterton, the newsboy, sat in the little room, gazing wistfully upon the face of his dead mother, and wondering what would become of him and the infant that slept so calmly beside the corpse.

Daniel was fully old enough to comprehend his desolation.

"What's going to become of us?" he said, addressing his conversation to the sleeping babe. "Blest if I know," he continued, answering his own question. "If I only had myself to look after, I wouldn't care; but that baby—ah!" and he heaved a deep sigh, as if oppressed by the weight of responsibility. "That's what gets me. I can get along myself; I can bunk anywhere, but the baby can't. Some chaps, now, would run off and leave it to take care of itself, but I ain't one of that kind. You're my relation, old gal; I'm your mother now, an' I'm blest if I don't stick by you, so help me Bob!" and he waved his hand patronizingly toward the

baby. Then a brilliant idea seemed to strike the boy.

"If I could only get some one to take care of it 'bout four or five years; wouldn't that be just old king! Then it would be big enough to leave alone, an' I could look after it, high! But where am I going to get any one to take care of it? If I had the ding-bats, now, it would be all right. Crickey!" and sharp Daniel slapped his hand upon his knee, vigorously, as another brilliant idea struck him. "That gal in the front room has got lots of money; she had a roll of bills as big as my fist when I went for the rent last week. A high old music-teacher, she is! Never goes out nor nothing; an' then that Broadway 'sport' with the kids an' cane that comes to see her! Guess I'm fly!" and the boy winked one eye, significantly. It was plainly evident that the street-life that young Catterton had led had made him old before his time.

"S'pose I goes in an' helps myself to that roll of bills?" and at the very thought the boy glanced around nervously as if afraid of being watched. "She can get plenty more. It'll save this little kid from starving. Blest if I don't do it!" and the boy shut his teeth together firmly.

"The dogs take what comes in their way. I heard a feller say the other day as how the world owed us all a living; that kid ain't big enough to fight, so I'll fight instead. I know exactly where she keeps the 'spondulices,' 'cos I see'd her put the roll in the drawer. I've got the key of the door between. I'll watch her when she goes to bed, an' after she goes to sleep, I'll go for the roll. This little baby shan't starve while it has got a big brother."

Notwithstanding the boy got up, crossed the apartment and entered the little bedroom adjoining, carrying his chair with him. From the bedroom a door led into the front-room that the poor widow had furnished and let to the music-teacher. Over the door was a transom of ground glass. A corner of one of the panes had been broken, leaving a small place through which one could command a view of the front room.

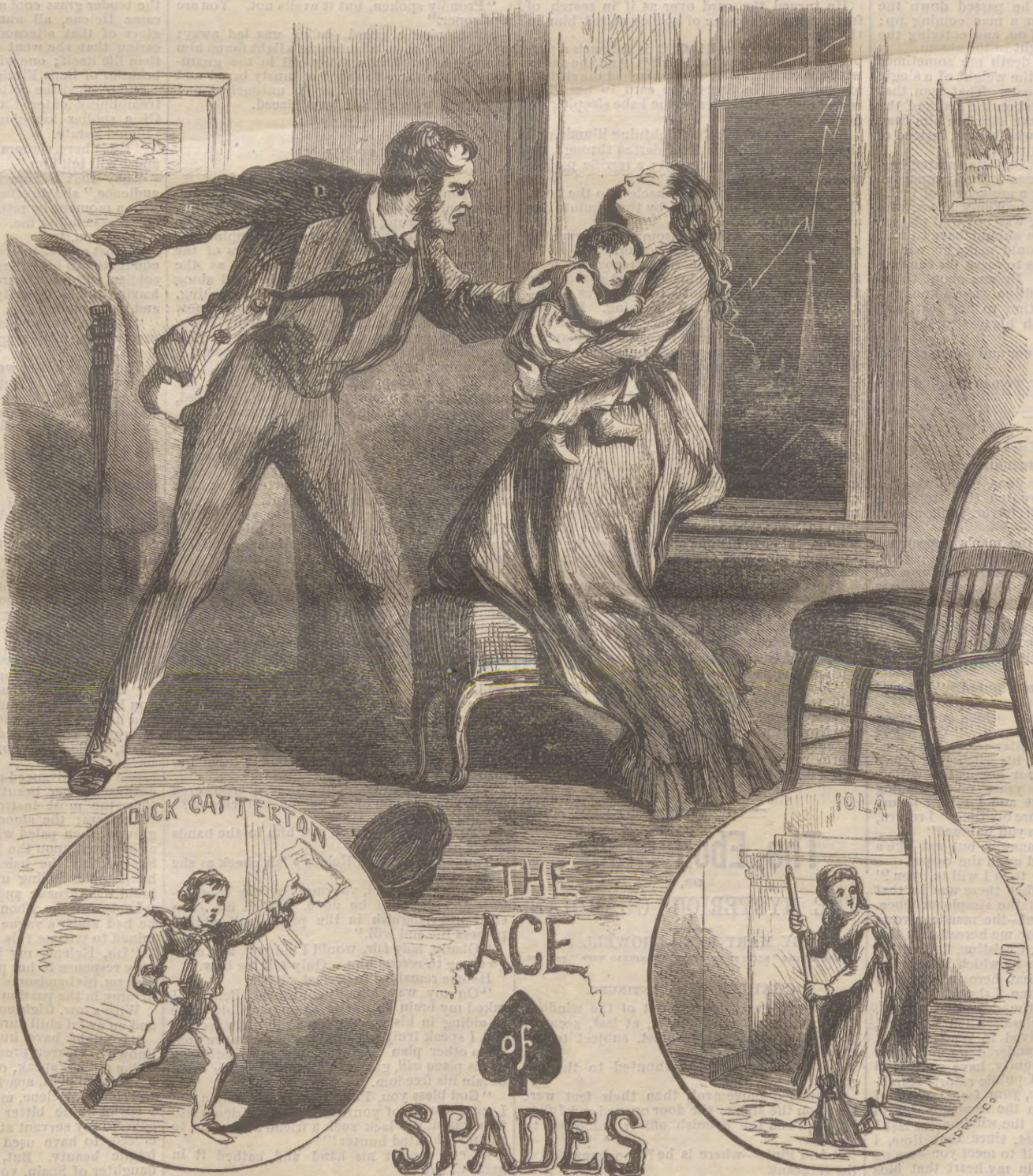
Placing an empty box on his chair, the boy mounted, and putting his eye to the hole, looked into the room.

We will follow his example.

The front room was comfortably furnished—evidently the occupant had added many articles of her own to the furniture she had hired. A bright fire blazed in the cheerful open stove. By the stove stood a little crib in which slept an infant, possibly a year old. By the door stood two people, a man and woman. The man was young, probably about twenty-five, and from his dress and manner one could easily tell that he belonged to the upper-class and basked in the smiles of fortune. The woman was small in figure, young in years, fresh and beautiful in face. She was a blonde, with mild blue eyes and silken, golden hair.

"Must you go now?" she asked.

"Yes, dear," he answered, "I have to



"ON THE WHITE SKIN OF THE BABE THE LIGHTNING HAD EMBLAZONED THE ACE OF SPADES."

meet a friend on Broadway at a quarter past nine."

"Will you come back to-night, Loyal?" "Yes, I'll be here about ten; I'll give you another hour before I go home," he said.

"I wish you could be with me more," she spoke with a sigh. "I am so lonesome without you. The only consolation I have is to look into Essie's face and try and detect a resemblance to yours."

"Ah, pet!" and he patted her cheek fondly; "the time will soon come when I can acknowledge you freely, before the whole world."

"When will the divorce be granted?" "Within a week, my lawyers say; then I can openly make you my wife."

"I live in constant terror now," she said, and a shade passed over her face as she spoke; "if he should return and discover my retreat, he would kill me, or worse—would tear me from you."

"There is little danger. Poor girl, you have dared all for me; never mind, I have a whole lifetime to repay you in, and we'll be happy yet, as the song says."

"Suppose," she said, nervously, "that he should discover me, or that any thing should happen, so that I should have occasion to send for you suddenly: I do not know your address, how then can I warn you?"

"I'll give it to you—got a card?" he answered.

"There are some in my work-basket," she said. Then she went to the table and took a card from it—a plain white card. On the card he wrote with his pencil, "No. 810 Fifth avenue," then gave the card into her hands.

"It's big enough for a dozen addresses," he said, laughing.

She read the address and then mechanically turning the card over saw that it was a playing-card, one of the white-back kind so much in use by sporting men. The card was the ace of spades.

"Spades are trumps," he said, with a light laugh.

She shuddered; a presentiment of evil filled her soul.

"It's an evil omen," she said. "Spades are signs of disaster and death."

"In fortune-telling that bodes a coffin: but, psaw! that's nonsense. Well, good-by, Christine. I'll be back about ten. Hearts are trumps with us, not spades."

And so with a farewell kiss upon the red lips held up so willingly to receive it, the young man left the room. As he passed down the stairs he almost ran over a man coming up; apologizing, he continued on, and entering the street was soon lost to sight in the gloom.

In this world, life and death are sometimes so evenly balanced that the weight of a single hair will determine the scale. That man that Loyal Tremaine ran against on the stairs of the tenement-house would have stricken him dead at his feet had he known who he was, instead of passing him by with a courtly bow.

After Loyal's departure, Christine seated herself at the table, still gazing intently upon the card which seemed to her a messenger of evil.

The boy-watcher at the broken-window, who could hear as well as see, was not well pleased with the thought that he should have to wait till midnight before he could make his raid on the roll of bills which was to serve for the support of the "little kid." He was about to descend from his spying position when a knock at the door brought Christine to her feet, and caused him to remain with his eye to the hole in the transom.

Christine opened the door and a man stalked into the room.

With a cry of horror the woman recoiled from him.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINT OF THE LIGHTNING.

THE stranger closed the door, turned the key in the lock, then confronted the trembling Christine, who, pale with terror, sunk almost fainting into a chair.

There was nothing in the man's appearance to excite terror. He was a stoutly-built person, probably thirty or thirty-five years old; bronzed in face and with a sailor-like look. He was dressed neatly in dark clothes, and wore a short cloak over his shoulder.

The stranger gazed upon the trembling woman with a mournful look.

"Christine, I have found you at last," he said, slowly.

"Oh, heaven!" she murmured, "I feared this."

"You did?" the stranger asked, and a peculiar look shone in his dark eyes. "You feared my coming. These are bitter words for a husband to hear coming from his wife's lips. Two years ago I left you in your home at New Bedford to be gone three years on a whaling voyage. My ship is lost and I return to my home and wife a year before my time. I return, and what do I find? Can you tell me?"

The woman did not answer, but sat like a statue with her gaze fixed upon the carpet.

"You do not answer; then I will tell you!" Oh! the tone of agony that there was in that man's voice as he uttered the simple sentence.

"I found a home deserted—the marriage-vows broken, and desolation for me hereafter in this world. You were gone, Christine, fled with a villain. You left no clue by which I could follow you, but I guessed that here in this great city, the whirlpool of crime, I should find you. I came here—employed the detective officers, but the search was useless. Then I, myself, like the red Indian, resolved to track you out. For a long time I have wandered up and down in this great sink of iniquity, have visited all the theaters, all places of public resort, searching for one object only, your face. To-day I came past this house on the opposite side of the street. I saw you at the window; at last I had found you. And yet, since that time, I have been nerving myself to meet you—trying to keep down the devil in my heart that bids me to kill you."

Trembling with fright Christine sprang to

her feet; a deadly terror was in her soul. She read danger in the fierce dark eyes of Walter Averill, her sailor husband.

"Hear me, Walter," she murmured, with blanched lips. "I have sinned—I know it—I am conscious of it! But no being in this world falls without a reason; then hear mine. I never loved you; my parents forced me to marry you because you were rich. You were all to me that a man should be to a woman, and yet from the hour that I stood by your side at the altar, I loathed you. It is bitter for me to speak these words, it must be bitter for you to hear them; but you must know the truth. The man that I fled with loves me—I love him, love him better than I do my own life. He is not a villain, but means me well. I have applied for a divorce; in a week it will be granted; then he will make me his wife."

"His wife!" and there was menace in the tones of the sailor's voice as he spoke; "um—perhaps! What is his name?" Averill's voice was cold and calm as he asked the question.

"I will not tell you," faltered the trembling lips of the woman.

"I will find him if I have to seek him in the depths of hell!" said the sailor, in icy tones.

Christine's heart sunk within her at the threat.

Then Averill's eye fell upon the infant sleeping in the crib. His features were for a moment distorted with sudden pain.

The sailor advanced to the crib; quick as thought the mother snatched the child in her arms and hugged it to her breast as though to shield it from him.

"His child?" he asked.

"Yes," she murmured, and quickly retreating to the window threw it up as if to call for assistance.

"Do not fear," he said. "I will harm neither you nor the infant; but for him, let him look to himself!" The tone boded danger to the absent man.

Then the keen eyes of the sailor fell upon the card upon the table. He saw the man's handwriting, eagerly he caught it up.

"810 Fifth avenue!" that is his address, is it not?" he cried, with a gleam in his dark eyes, approaching the almost fainting woman.

Christine strove to speak, but her tongue seemed glued to the roof of her mouth; she could not articulate a word.

What was the storm raging so wildly without to the tempest in the soul of the sailor husband.

He turned the card over as if in search of further proof; the ace of spades stared him in the face.

"The omen of evil! fit it is for such a purpose. Do you see what it is?" And the sailor with the card in his hand approached the shrinking woman. He thrust the card to her till it rested on the shoulder of the babe sleeping on her breast.

Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning illuminated the room, the electric fluid darted through the window into the apartment; a terrific peal of thunder followed.

The sailor was stricken senseless to the floor. Christine stood motionless by the window like a marble statue.

The watcher at the transom stared upon the scene, his eyes dilated with horror.

In a few minutes the sailor recovered from the shock. He rose to his feet and approached the woman. She did not stir. She was dead—killed by the stroke of lightning. Its livid marks were upon her pale face. The babe still slept on its dead mother's breast. The playing-card, too, had disappeared, but in its place where it had fallen upon the infant's shoulder, the night-dress had been scorched and burnt away, and there on the white skin appeared in bluish tint, the ace of spades; the print of the lightning.

Horror-stricken for a moment the sailor gazed upon the work of death.

"It is the act of heaven!" he cried; "her crime is punished without mortal aid. The child of sin too is branded with an ineffaceable mark. Poor babe, my vengeance does not extend to you; but for him, the author of this wrong, I'll have his life, although I swing for it the next moment. He may return here; for a time I'll wait."

Then, taking the sleeping babe from the arms of its dead mother, he placed it in its crib. The body of his erring wife, the hapless Christine, he placed upon the bed. Tears filled the eyes of the iron-willed sailor as he gazed upon the face of the woman that he had once loved with all the passion of his being.

"May her sins be pardoned hereafter," he said, with a longing look at the still face. Then he seated himself at the table.

"Now let him come; it only needs his death to complete the catalogue of horrors. The storm rages without, human passions within; it is a night fitted for bloody deeds."

(To be Continued.)

The Ebon Mask:

OR,

THE MYSTERIOUS GUARDIAN.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

AUTHOR OF THE "SCARLET CRESCENT," "INJURED WIFE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XI.—CONTINUED.

THE men gazed eagerly out of the window. Truly, there was the hunter, at last, securely bound, a captive in their midst, subject to the commandant's pleasure.

"Bring them up," he shouted to the sergeant.

A hurried movement, then their feet were heard on the stairs; the door opened and Julian St. John and the Spanish officer stood face to face.

"And Pinto—where is he?" he demanded of the sergeant.

"Escaped, señor, and fled, I know not whither."

Zarate's eyes darkened, as if in displeasure.

"You may return to your quarters; you and your men."

Profound silence reigned in the room, unbroken even by the low murmur of the breeze. His feet fastened by a chain, and his arms tightly bound, Julian stood proudly defiant, his handsome face blazing with scorn.

Opposite him, in languid haughtiness, sat his captor, carelessly smoking, as if in utter contempt of his prisoner. A sarcastic smile shone over all his features as he addressed the hunter.

"Well, sir, I suppose you perceive you are in my power at last."

"In your presence, Colonel Zarate, but in your power—no!" replied Julian, fixing his eyes on the colonel's face.

The officer smiled, and pointed significantly to the chains.

"These matter little to me!" returned St. John. "And, bound and fettered though I be, I ask no favors of you or any one in your service. If you think to intimidate me with words, you are mistaken; for I scorn you and your power."

Julian's eyes flashed upon his rival.

"Peace, boy; remember who you are, and what I am; just—"

"Pray, what are you, but a contemptible specimen of depraved humanity?" burst forth from the hunter's lips, with all the impetuosity of his nature. "Who are you, indeed, that send your spies out after a lady, a pure-minded girl, that you may compel a love which you can not win? You, who—"

Fired with fearful rage, Zarate strode across the room, and with the flat of his sword struck Julian a blow, bringing his words abruptly to a close.

"Hold, Zarate! You are hasty—that is unkind," interposed De Leon, who had remained a silent spectator of the scene.

For a half-second Julian's self control well nigh deserted him; then, with a mighty effort he calmed his rage. "Pitiful coward!" said he to the colonel. "I can forgive that blow of one who so far forgets his manhood as to strike a defenseless prisoner."

"You dare call me a coward, you dog of an American! But your pretended courage will be brought low; remember, Julian St. John, there are deep, dangerous and gloomy cells where such as you are confined."

"The heart of the hunter—the heart Helene holds—never yet pulsated with fear."

A spasm of rage crossed Zarate's countenance.

"Proudly spoken, but it avails not. You are a prisoner."

Summoning a guard, Julian was led away; and the first dawn of morning's light found him securely fettered in a filthy cell in the guard-house, with the allowance of musty bread and unpalatable water standing all untouched and unnoticed, where it had been placed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAGED BIRD.

RAPIDLY as a young deer, lightly as the nimble-footed chamois leaps over its native hills, Pepe Pinto sprang from cliff to cliff, from ledge to ledge of that wild descent, stopping for naught but to yell back upon the ears of the soldiers his shout of defiance. Fast as the gathering darkness would allow, he sped along through the dark aisles of the forest, crashing, in his haste, among the tangled bushwood; now upon open ground, now over the marshy brook, then over the roadside. Here he slackened his speed somewhat, but only to rest a moment.

Tightening the belt around his waist, and wiping the dripping perspiration from his heated face, he again put forth all his speed, hastening toward the village of Pensacola.

He had completed about half his journey, and was hurrying along beside the edge of a dense wood, when he was suddenly accosted by a woman arrayed in robes of midnight blackness. Her tones were polite and courteous, and her expressions refined and intelligent.

"Señor, may a stranger inquire your haste? Yet hardly a 'stranger'; for, if I mistake not, you are a friend of the lady Helene, and her friends I call not strangers, but brothers."

"Then, you can surely appreciate my haste; for I go to bear her bad tidings—sad news of her lover, the brave Julian, who is, this moment, a prisoner in the hands of Colonel Zarate's soldiers."

"A prisoner? impossible! Then I will not detain you longer; but bid her be of good cheer, for, under God's blessing, all shall be well."

She turned aside to let him pass. Respectfully raising the gloved hand to his lips, he bowed and again pursued his way.

A short time brought him to the end of his journey, and his message to Helene filled her heart with terror and grief.

"Oh, Pinto, you are sure they overpowered him? you are confident he did not escape?" she importuned.

"Positive, my lady. I saw him in the hands of his captors."

The tears fell upon Helene's fair cheek as she thought of his fate.

"Pepe," she said, vehemently, "we must release him: it must be done. Julian St. John shall not languish in the prison cell while I possess life and will."

"Gladly, lady fair, would I aid you, and even go alone to rescue him. Only tell me how."

Helene remained in perfect silence.

"On my way here," continued Pepe, "I raked my brain to devise some plausible mode of aiding in his escape, but I did not succeed. But I speak truly, señorina, when I assure you, if no other plan can avail, and my substitution in his place will, gladly, willingly, joyfully will I obtain his freedom."

"God bless you, Pinto, and make Julian and I more worthy of your disinterested friendship. May you never lack such a friend as you are to the poor hunted hunter!"

Helene caught his hand and bathed it in grateful tears.

"Pepe, I must go and intercede for him, who is dearer than life to me. Yes, I must, I will

go, and if Colonel Zarate is human, he can not refuse my prayers. I have decided; and ere to-morrow's sun goes down, I shall have presented my petition."

"My dear lady, do not! I implore you desist. Indeed, you risk your life—ay, pardon me, my dear lady, but you risk more! Colonel Zarate is a man of whom you know little; of whom I know much. Therefore, I beseech you, lady, by the love you bear Julian, by the regard you entertain for your unworthy friend, refrain from so rash an act."

The lady's face reddened as she listened and replied:

"Thanks, many, many thanks, dear Pepe. But I must go, my friend, trusting in God to protect me."

"Then, lady, I bid you adieu. My errand is accomplished, my message delivered. I shall return to the forest until I can learn what had best be done. Farewell, dear lady, and may Heaven's purest spirits attend and guard you."

Shouldering his heavy rifle, he left the lonely cottage in the orange bower, and returned to his lonesome haunts in the silent depths of the woods.

Slowly and tediously passed the hours to the almost distracted girl, who, pacing her chamber floor, wept and prayed. The morning came, and with it rose the sun whose setting should witness the success or failure of her mission.

"Tis true," she murmured to her own heart, as in the silent night-watches she had communed with herself, "tis too true, I fear, that the commandant will deny my request; but, be that as it may, I shall go, and if ever mortal shall plead, it will be me. And I know the angels of innocence will guard me, and God grant to touch the captor's stony heart."

The morning hours sped by, and the midday sun shone high in the heavens, and completed half his downward course, ere Helene started to the colonel's presence.

It was about four o'clock of a most lovely afternoon; the air was warm and fragrant, laden with spicy sweets and scents of flowers. The beauteous bay in placid smoothness rippled softly on, and cooled the air with its moisture.

On the shore bloomed the gorgeous southern flowers; snowy orange blossoms, mingling their delicious perfume with the ripening fruit whose golden globes gleamed among the deep, rich, green foliage, contrasting with the creamy buds, and resembling rare emeralds, and cool, glowing pearls floating in a sea of molten gold.

Through the sweet-breathed myrtle avenue, the tender grass cool and grateful to the tread, came Helene, all unmindful of the heavenly glory of that afternoon; only knowing, only caring that she went to plead for one dearer than life itself; one without whom the fairest beauties of Linda Florida were as a desert place.

She reached the cottage on the bay shore, and tremblingly entered the widely-opened door. Of a soldier lounging near she inquired for Colonel Zarate.

"He is here, señorina, in his room. Be seated and I will tell him."

"Say that Señora Helene Valencia desires audience," she directed.

In a moment he returned.

"Please follow me. The colonel is alone and will see you."

Almost apprehensively she followed, and was conducted to his—the villain's—presence. The soldier withdrew, carefully closing the door, leaving the two, purity and villainess, innocence and guilt, alone.

"Be firm!" she whispered to her heart, as she pressed her hands against it to still its wild throbbings.

The officer arose, well knowing the reason of her coming, but he determined to assume a bold demeanor, as though friendship's silken tie united them. Deferentially he advanced, and extending his hand with friendly nonchalance, said:

"Truly, fair lady, I am signally honored. Can it be possible I see you here, or do my senses deceive me?"

Calmly and firmly she refused his offered hand, and then drew back, removing from her face her veil.

"Why, what does this mean?" he inquired, in a well-simulated tone of honest surprise.

"I wonder, sir, that my presence here at this particular time is not sufficient explanation," said Helene, with quiet dignity.

"True, by St. Genevieve," replied the commandant, with a sarcastic voice. "Truly, I had nearly forgotten, in my delight at seeing you, the probable reason why you thus honor me; had well-nigh forgotten that—"

"That Helene Valencia came to plead for one you hold captive—came to implore you, by all you hold dear and sacred, to remove the awful weight of sorrow and agony pressing on my heart, while he, my loved one, is a captive, and uncared for!"

She had advanced a step nearer him; in her enthusiasm her beautiful black eyes, brighter than the most lustrous ebony, were suffused with tears; the smooth, polished cheek first glowed, then paled with emotion; and Zarate, as he gazed upon the lonely features of the noble girl, felt the baleful flame warming in his heart and bubbling up in hot streams till his brain was turned; and, despite the warning of "Leota, of the Ebon Mask," which, till now, he had under a vague fear regarded, he determined to possess this beautiful maiden.

"Oh, Helene, my beautiful bird!" was his only response to her petition, as he reached out his arm, his handsome eyes subdued and tender, dreamy in the passion that filled them.

With a low, frightened cry she sprang back, and an awful chill curdled her heart.

"I might have known, oh, I might have known! Heaven preserve me!"

She did not speak, only thought it, and stood with veiled eyes, apart from the man.

"Helene, Helene, my only love, listen. When I spoke those bitter words that night I discovered my servant at your cottage, I was mad, crazed, to have used such words to you, my fragile beauty. But, oh, oh, Helene, lovely daughter of Spain, you do not, can not understand the great, the mighty love I bear for you. Oh, lady, angel star, I would not hurt one beau-

tiful curl of that shapely head; I would be calm, respectful; but can you behold my passionate love, and feel no returning, responsive affection?"

She remained perfectly quiet a moment, then suddenly broke forth:

"And when I plead for one whom I love, even as you profess to regard me, will you turn a deaf ear to my entreaties?"

"But it is because I love you, *adore* you, Helene, and can not, *will* not suffer myself to think of you as another's. Oh, answer me, lady, if I were in *his* place, would you thus plead for me?"

"Ah, then," returned she, quickly, "you admit he is here, which you pretended not to know!"

He bit his lip in provoked silence, and paused a moment to reflect upon the answer. Then he renewed his importunate entreaties, until, tired and disgusted, Helene replied:

"Your conduct and language, Colonel Zarate, are distasteful to me, and I command you to desist. I do not love you, which you well know; and, sooner than marry one who can do as you are doing, and have done, I'd thrust my hand in the fire, till it should consume to ashes!"—in a tone of unflinching firmness.

That reply aroused the latent devil in the Spaniard's soul, and in a paralysis of furious rage, he stood, powerless to move, glaring upon her with all the fiendishness of a demon.

"Very well, girl; and just in proportion as you despise my love, you shall feel my power!"

She shuddered, but firmly replied, in a low, undisturbed voice:

"Sir, I can pity you, who threaten a woman. But, let me assure you, that, even as I despise your love, do I defy your power."

"Do you pretend to abuse my authority—me?"

"As the commander of the post, you certainly are in possession, and, perhaps, further. But I do, most emphatically, deny your authority in daring to coerce me in any possible way; and, I doubt, also, the expediency of your detaining your prisoner—Julian St. John, upon grounds you know are false!"

There was a gleam in her eye, but she seemed unmoved.

"Again, sir, I demand—will you release him?"

"Never, unless—"

"What?" she eagerly inquired.

"You promise to become my wife."

Her face grew ashen pale, while he continued:

"Consent, and he is free within the hour; refuse, and you leave not this house till you are my wife. We will see what force can do."

Helene drew her slight form proudly up, and regarded him with a look of ineffable scorn.

"Sir, I know not what you intend to do, nor what you expect of me; but, *this I do know*, and can say, that you, nor any mortal on this earth can compel me to be your wife! Sooner than that, I would die!"

"Indeed!" and advancing a step, he reached forth to catch her. But he had miscalculated his distance; she had waited for this, and stooping, like a spirit she glided under his arm, unlatched the door and noiselessly and rapidly glided out of the house.

For a single second, Zarate stood, a statue of thwarted passion and rage. His face was livid, his eyes wild, and he reached idly out as if clutching after her. For a second he stood, speechless, silent; then, as the slight form glided past the window, volition returned and his fertile brain commenced plotting.

"Ho, there, boy, send Ricovo hither instantly. *Instantly*, d'ye hear?" he shouted to some one underneath the window; and, ere the command had left his lips, Ricovo stood before him.

"There, d'ye see that girl, Helene Valencia, just entering the myrtle avenue? Well, follow her, and when she reaches the furthest part, overpower her, and bring her back to me. Come in the back way, and avoid disturbance. Take a trusty comrade, and make no delay, for the sun is down and the road lonely for a distance. Hasten, and you shall be well rewarded."

Chafing like a caged tiger, he dispatched Ricovi, and watched him and a companion enter the avenue. Leaving him to his not-over-agreeable thoughts, we return to Helene.

"Safe, safe, thank God, but what a risk!" murmured the trembling girl, as she emerged from the inclosure surrounding the commandant's cottage. She drew her veil over her face, and walked quietly on, until she entered the fragrant myrtle path. The calm beauty of the early twilight, unnoticed before, filled her soul with a sweet, refreshing sense of its quiet coolness, and she went leisurely on, living over again the exciting scenes of the afternoon.

"No, Julian, Julian, my beloved! I have done what I could, but it was of no avail! In answer to my plea, I received an insult, and when I eagerly demanded the only price of your freedom, my loved one, 'twas an alternative you would indignantly have rejected. *His* wife! Oh, heavens, what a destiny!"

"But, despair not; other means shall yet be tried and other plans devised which may be successful. Until then, oh, heart, be calm and trusting."

Thus the sweet girl communed with her own thoughts as she pursued her way toward her home.

"Bird of the Forest, it has been long since Nina gazed upon your fair face, and listened to your musical tones."

It was the crazy Nina who suddenly appeared in her path.

"From whence come you, Nina?" Helene inquired.

"From the forest, where the sun has shone brightly in poor Nina's hut ever since the day she felt the sweet lips of the Singing Bird pressed to hers."

Nina looked significantly at Helene, her large, mournful black eyes filled with unutterable love.

"Helene's heart is light if she brightened a sister's home."

"Yes, the hut in the forest is beautiful now, for it is lighted by the kiss of a pure maiden,

and the dark woods seem less lonely when Nina wanders through, because in her heart, like twin angels bearing her company, are the remembrance of a fond caress and loving words."

The gentle girl blushed.

"Nina's words make me happy, and—"

"Hark!" interrupted the woman.

The two bent listening.

"I hear nothing; what is it?" resumed Helene.

"Footsteps; hark," returned her companion.

Helene screamed loudly, for a heavy hand was laid on her shoulder; she turned toward Nina, but she was gone, and Helene was alone with the ruffians. Screams fell from her pallid lips, as she vainly endeavored to free herself from Ricovo's grasp; but that rude hold was strong as iron, and she was an infant in strength under it.

"What do you want? Oh, let me go!"

"No; mus' go with 'Covey back to cottage. Come, not far."

"Oh, no, no, I can not. Let go, you hurt my shoulder."

"Be keeful, man; you know what the kurnel sed, not to be overly rough."

It was a harsh voice that interposed, but there was humanity in its tones; at least Helene imagined so, and she turned to him.

"Oh, sir, what does it all mean? Why am I detained? Let me go, I implore, I beg! Do not be so cruel; it can do you no good."

"Dun'no nothin' 'bout it, gal; only we must obey orders. Be stiddy, and come along quiet-like, or mebbe 'twon't be so pleasant."

Helene's heart sunk within her, for she felt another hand tighten on the fair arm, and she was a close prisoner.

"May God preserve me!" she prayed.

More dead than alive, so overcome was she from terror and apprehensive fear, the men found it no difficult task to bring her, unobserved, to the presence of her tormentor.

Weak, faint and trembling she stood before him.

"Ah, Signorina Helene, I see you have returned to reconsider that too hasty decision," was his greeting.

"Silence, sir, I command you! The mask is off, and I see you now even more plainly than before, the villain that you are."

"Rail on, fair beauty," replied Zarate, contemptuously; "but know that the time has come when I shall no longer use honeyed words or sweet pleadings; but, you in turn, are at my feet—are my suppliant. You will sue for mercy, but in vain. Even as you spurned me, will I reject you; but, something worse than contempt is your destiny. Mark you, lady fair, your fate is decided. You love a man—no, not a man—a fool, a coward, whom I despise, hate; and if only to torment him, you shall suffer!"

"Corporal, remove this woman; she is an enemy to the Spanish government. Place her in the lowest dungeon, and see that you have an efficient guard to be relieved every two hours till midnight, when you may call me."

Helene had fainted, and was carried, all unconscious, to the place of confinement. Under the same roof with her lover, both secure in his hands, what wonder that the villainous countenance of Colonel Zarate expressed what his black soul felt, fiendish satisfaction?

CHAPTER XIII. THE MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

WHEN Nina thus suddenly, and apparently in cowardice, left her terrified companion with the two ruffians, it was with an eye to Helene's own ultimate safety. With a natural shrewdness she suspected the object of the men's presence, and well knowing the unfortunate girl would need assistance—also remembering the grief and apprehension her mother would experience—determined to aid Helene as best lay in her power, and that was to apprise Señora Valencia, and if possible procure assistance.

She found the matron in her cottage, anxiously awaiting the return of Helene, who had gone on her errand to Zarate in opposition to her desire. True, her mother had not absolutely forbidden her going, yet she strongly objected to it; leaving, however, Helene to use her own discretion.

"Ah, I might have known it! Fool that I was to permit her to go!" she said, bitterly, when Nina told her.

Further conversation passed between them, and then the forest-wanderer left the home of Helene, and plunged again into the dark woods, gloomy with the night-shades.

Down in a dismal cell, which looked all the more ghostly from the faint rays of a candle, whose beams sought in vain to penetrate the furthest corners, upon a rude couch of straw covered with a soldier's blanket, lay the exhausted form of a lady, fair and lovely. Her long, curling tresses, unconfined by comb or cord, fell in luxuriant abundance over her white neck and arms; the eyes, dim and swelled with weeping, were fixed upon the floor, and the long lashes swept upon the cheeks pallid as the newly-fallen snow in our cold Northland.

Bowed with anguish, filled with an indefinable terror, Helene Valencia looked the picture of beautiful despair, as alone at that midnight hour she held communion with her soul. From the death-like trance into which she had fallen upon being carried to Colonel Zarate's presence, she had recovered, only to find herself in that awful place.

Consciousness gradually returned, bringing with it full possession of her faculties. She remembered the threats made by the commandant, that she should be his wife; and, even in that lonely spot, the burning blush rushed to her cheeks as she dwelt upon it.

"So help me Heaven, I will be true to Julian, my first, my only love; and sooner than unite my destiny with that man, I will perish here, inch by inch, amid the dirt and horrible loneliness."

A shudder quivered over her frame, but in her eyes gleamed the high, holy resolve, the firm, unwavering determination.

The hours passed slowly on to the captive, and

the midnight bell had ceased ringing, its low echoes reverberating through the dark night, and still Helene sat, sleepless and watchful. As she gazed upon the long, flickering flame of the solitary candle, whose untrimmed wick, which had burnt since it was carelessly set there, together with the scanty allowance of fare, seeing naught, but suffering, oh! so much, she imagined she heard the heavy wooden door creak on its hinges. She turned quickly, and a low scream escaped her lips, as she saw, standing within her cell, a figure arrayed in robes of midnight hue.

A long, gracefully adjusted veil completely covered the head, face and body, defying recognition. The heavy folds of the thick black dress swept voluminously around the form, and lay upon the damp floor at her feet. Under ordinary circumstances, this sorrowfully-arrayed person would have passed unnoticed along the public streets, for her toilette was that of a mourner; her whole manner denoting extreme grief, nothing mysterious or weird about it. But, at this peculiar time, under the particular circumstances, and when it seemed utterly impossible that any one could gain admittance, the black-robed lady's sudden appearance startled Helene, who, as she uttered the frightened cry, sprang to her feet.

"Fear not, my child. I seek not to harm you, but, if possible, to prove myself a friend."

The sweet, gentle tone reassured the trembling prisoner.

"Oh, dear lady, whoever you are, save me; for the love of Heaven, aid me in flying from this fearful place."

"No such urging is necessary, my poor caged dove; you are in trouble, and my heart aches when I think of what you are undergoing. But, be of good cheer, my child; be comforted, and, under Heaven's blessing, you will be free, free as air ere many hours."

"Oh, take me now! Let me go away now, instantly, from this damp, lonesome place. Mysterious stranger, do not refuse my prayers!"

Helene clasped her hands imploringly.

"Not now, or even to-night, can you leave your captivity behind you. It would be inexpedient, yes, impracticable, were Antonio Zarate to find his lovely bird flown when he pays his first visit."

The shiver that greeted her last words did not escape her eyes.

"Fear not, Helene—you see I know your name—when he comes. Depend upon my word that no harm can or will come to you; and, pardon me for suggesting, but an humble demeanor, one in which you must necessarily disguise your feelings even at the expense of personal pride, would be the surest to blind him as to your real motives, thus rendering him less suspicious, and our intended escape more certain and safe."

"It shall be as you say, for, oh, unknown lady, I am trusting you infinitely. Every word you say I believe as though it fell from my mother's lips. Do not disappoint me, and the warm love of a true heart shall ever reward you. 'Escape!' Sweet sound! God grant success."

"Leota of the Ebon Mask" never fails to fulfill a promise, and two more suns shall rise, you will be far from these prison walls."

Helene gazed in wonderment upon her midnight visitor.

"Leota"—is it possible I see her of whom I so often have heard? One whom people look upon as almost supernatural, so mysterious are her comings and goings, so silent and oftentimes unexplainable her appearances."

Leota laughed. It was like a low, rippling wave of melody.

"And do the villagers regard me with so much awe? Really and truly, though, I do not much wonder at it, for my business leads me in many strange places, and at peculiar times. However, Helene, I can assure you I am no spirit, no uneasy ghost unable to rest quietly in my grave, but a mortal, of genuine flesh and blood, quite as human as yourself. See."

She drew off the black glove and disclosed a pretty hand, small and dark-hued. Helene extended her own, and the two met, both warm and clinging; and as the fingers closed over each other, in a sympathetic embrace, a feeling, strangely akin to that which filled her soul on the day when she lay on poor Nina's bosom, swept over Helene's entire being, and she impulsively pressed the delicate hand to her lips. Resolutely she controlled her emotion and again addressed Leota.

"But, dear lady, you are a mystery to me. Who are you, and from whence did you come, and why that mournful garb?" she eagerly questioned.

Leota drew her glove on again, and replied, in a strangely sad tone:

"Who I am no one knows, at least in Pensacola, save one; people call me 'The Ebon Mask' because I ever wear these sad-colored garments, and habitually veil my face. For long years, Helene, no human being, save one, has looked upon my features; the mysterious veil repulses all curious glances."

"But, why?" persisted Helene.

"I can not tell you that, except that I am a mystery and shall remain so until my task, my self-appointed life-work is accomplished; never does this mask arise and disclose the face beneath until my vow is completed. Not until I unmask another before the world, a despicable villain, do I show who or what I am."

Her earnest language filled Helene with admiration, not, however, unmingled with awe and a desire to learn further.

"You called me by my name, Leota; will you tell me how you knew it, and why you came to aid me to escape from *his* power?"

"I know you, my child, and have known you for many years; and, ever interested in the good, the pure and the innocent, I came."

"But, how you came is a deeper mystery still, for a sentinel guards the door, and it is securely fastened by a massive lock and keys."

Leota smiled, and held before her astonished gaze the key of the dungeon!

Helene trembled.

"Strange creature! I shall shortly fear you even as I now am mystified. The key, how did you obtain it?"

"Easily enough, doubting maiden; just as I intend returning it when I leave you, which must be now, for the morning dawn will soon be upon us, and were I discovered here, our plans might prove futile. I will tell you when I see you again; but, I had quite forgotten something."

She drew from her dress a small parcel, containing food for Helene—*oranges, figs and grapes.*

Laying her hand on the maiden's head for a second, she turned away. Helene watched her slowly swing back the ponderous door, fit the key in its place, and then the door closed, leaving the captive alone in the place rendered doubly gloomy by the late mysterious presence. She heard the click of the lock, and the grating noise as the key was withdrawn; she listened while the bolt, an additional security, was shot into its place. The faint echo of light footsteps, rapidly gliding away, grew fainter and fainter; then solemn stillness reigned.

Somewhat encouraged, Helene allowed herself to fall into a light slumber, from which she did not awaken until almost noon, judging from the few straggling rays of light that crept in through the thin rift in the dungeon wall, which served to light and ventilate the place.

"If I were only a man, how easily I could get out of this dungeon; but Zarate well knew when he put me here, how feeble is woman's strength. Oh, that my brave Julian were only in this room, so he might recover his freedom. Gladly would I exchange places with him, even though he be loaded with cruel chains. Oh, dearest Julian, you little know your own Helene is under the same roof as yourself, and a prisoner, too; confined for pleading in your behalf! But, courage, courage! for, when I am free, I will make another effort to release you!"

Her soliloquy was rudely disturbed by the turning of the key, and in an instant the door opened, admitting the hated person of her persecutor, the commandant. He advanced to the bench on which she was sitting, while she recoiled in horror. But she remembered the advice of her midnight visitor, and nerved by the thought of escape, and eventually obtaining Julian's release, by a mighty effort she disguised her emotions, and, to the eyes of her admiring jailer, appeared more the subdued, conquered maiden, than the loathing, terrified girl she was. Much—*every thing* depended upon her demeanor, and well did she play her part.

"I hope the lady rested well last night, although the accommodations are hardly what she is accustomed to."

"As well, señor, as could be expected."

"But, you look pale and careworn," he observed, with a searching glance.

"Is there not sufficient reason for that, señor?" she replied, averting her head.

"True, true, fair lady, and I assure you it causes me intense pain to be compelled to use that same reason in order to convince you of my truth."

"Truth, señor?"

"Ay, that I passionately love you, and desire it returned."

He bent close to her; her delicate cheek flushed painfully an instant, then the warm tint receded, leaving her pale and wan. She made no reply, and he continued:

"Signorina Helene, you are hard with me, and misunderstanding, as you do, my motives, it could scarcely be otherwise. Fair one, you know not the grief in my heart when I see you here, *my prisoner*, when I fain would grovel at your feet, a very slave. And yet, who is to censure? Ah, Helene, the door flies open at your command; speak but the word, and, as my promised wife, you walk forth, a queen, a sovereign."

"I can truly appreciate your condescension, señor, but it is not for the high, noble commandant, the gracious king's own messenger, to stoop to wed a poor, untitled maiden. Oh, no, no! for there are many high-born ladies who would be met to become of the knightly house of Zarate."

Was there covert scorn in that remark? His piercing eyes could discover no traces of it in the cast-down, saddened face, lovelier in its sorrow than ever before.

"Not so; and the name of Zarate would be honored by a Valencia assuming it."

"Ah, señor, spare me, and seek not to cast reproach upon my humble name. Do not press me, my lord, for I am unable to give you the required answer."

"Perhaps, now, you are unable, but I do not despair of it eventually."

"Let me undeceive you, then, and tell you my heart is another's, and my vow has been irrevocably given to him. Consequently you perceive the impossibility of consummating a union with one beneath you."

She said this quietly, carelessly, almost deferentially.

"Good," thought he, to himself; "this imprisoning business is just the thing. I knew it would take the starch out of her, and here, after one night's confinement, she is materially subdued—quite different from the impudent young termagant I thrust in here but yesterday. Another night, and I'll warrant she'll submit to anything. I won't press her this time, but come again to-morrow."

Thus thought Zarate, as he gazed upon the pale flower so crushed and drooping through his cruelty; and to his credit be it said—for it is the only good thing we are able to chronicle to his memory—a pang of remorse shot through his heart at the thought of his tormenting wickedness; but ere the thought was full-born, it died, and his heart grew callous again.

"I leave you, fair lady, to meditate upon my offer; till this time to-morrow I give you to consider and decide. Then I will come. *Buenos dias, signorina!*"

He was barely through the door when Helene fell upon her knees, the fast-gushing, grateful tears flowing down her cheeks.

"Thank God! thank God, it is over! I shall not see him again, for to-morrow, when he comes, I shall be far away!"

The hours of that beautiful day passed unheeded by; the setting sun went down upon its royal couch of purple clouds, curtained by the

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Bashfulness.—I'm a fearfully bashful fellow, but I can't help it. I always keep a fair distance from the young ladies. They sometimes try to flirt with me, but it's no use—Quill turns his head till he gets past them and then gives a long look (if they don't turn round to look at him), regretting that he didn't flirt too! Whenever I chance to be introduced to a young lady I can't help but make many blunders, which are both disagreeable to her and myself—especially me. I am very awkward when before them. I don't blame you, young men, for being bashful. I can imagine how you feel when you are introduced to a young lady—you feel as if you'd like to disappear through the floor—you are shaky all over, you think you make a bow, but are mistaken; it's only your legs shaking. But after a short time you'll get over that, and will be at home. I know a few young ladies, and few they are too. I generally make myself at home there, but regret forming the acquaintance of any more. Why, it was only to-day that I was going to see some friends, and I had no more than got up the hill when I saw a young lady by the gate talking to one of my friends, when I turned round and thought I'd got off undiscovered, but to my great surprise I heard one of the sisters of this friend sing out, "Ha! ha! ha! there comes Quill up the hill, and now is going back—ha! ha! ha!"

ha!" You had better believe that I took to my heels for fear that the young lady would espy me, and I escaped, but don't ever expect to hear the last of it. There are some young men who can make the acquaintance of young ladies in no time, and there are also young ladies who can, without the least fear, make the acquaintance of young men. I don't like such as that, on either side—I think it too bold, altogether. Not that a young man should not form the acquaintance of a fair number of young ladies, but there is such a thing as running it too far. I hear some say they belong to "first-class society," and can not help but mingle with so many. I don't like the flirt—there is nothing but attraction; there is but little common sense about them. While a young lady is promenading the streets, she could be better occupied helping her mother at home. I believe in their enjoying themselves at parties and balls; I believe in their going to the theater or any like amusement. I like to see a young lady who will take as much interest in the household duties as she does in amusements. Now, reader, don't you too? Be honest in your answer, and, girls, be ye wise enough to profit by that answer if you care to win the heart of some candid, honest man! QUILL QUILLERSON.

The Great Lesson.—The first lesson that a young man should learn is that he knows nothing. The earlier and the more thoroughly learned this is the better. A home-bred youth growing up in the light of parental admiration, with every thing to foster his vanity and self-esteem, is surprised to find, and often unwilling to acknowledge, the superiority of people. But he is compelled to learn his own insignificance; his airs are ridiculed, his blunders are exposed, his wishes are disregarded, and he is made to cut a sorry figure until his self-conceit is abashed, and he keenly feels that he knows nothing. When a young man has thoroughly comprehended the fact that he knows nothing, and that intrinsically he is but of little value, the next lesson is that the world cares nothing about him. He is the subject of no man's overwhelming admiration; neither petted by the one sex nor envied by the other, he has to take care of himself. He will not be noticed until he becomes noticeable; he will not become noticeable until he does something to prove that he is of some use to society. No recommendation or introduction will give him this or ought to give him this; he must do something to be recognized as somebody. The next lesson is that of patience. A man must learn to wait as well as to work, and to be content with those means of advancement in life which he may use with integrity and honor. Patience is one of the most difficult lessons to learn. It is natural for the mind to look for immediate results. Let this, then, be understood at starting; that the patient conquest of difficulties which rise in the regular and legitimate channels of business and enterprise is not only essential in securing the success which a young man seeks in life, but essential also to that preparation of the mind requisite for the enjoyment of success, and for retaining it when gained. It is the general rule in all the world and in all time, that unearned success is a curse.

Domestic Happiness.—While traveling, a few years since, I was detained some days in one of our Western cities. My room overlooked a lane or alley-way, in which were several houses occupied by the better class of artisans, and I became much interested in one of these, so much that no sooner did I hear a glad shout from a little voice than I knew it was meal-time, and "Daddy was coming," and I took up my point of observation in harmless and admiring scrutiny of the well-governed house. On the way in, the father raised the rejoicing child in his arms, and gave it two or three resounding smacks; another one had crept to the door-sill, and this was lifted also, and its little cheek laid tenderly upon the shoulder, which was hunched up to bring it close to that of the father. By this time the wife had brought a bowl of water, and a white, coarse towel; then she took the children down, applying sundry pats, now on the shoulders of the little ones, and now on the broad, fatherly ones; and while the husband gave a last rub of the hard, rough hands, he stretched out his neck and kissed the pretty, girlish wife, who would be hovering near him. They said grace, they dined at the plain, wholesome board, and more than once I found myself waiting them a benediction with the tears in my eyes. It is so brutish to pass without a word of recognition of the Great Giver. The husband was a grave man, and the wife a lively, cheery one, neat as a new pin, and very chatty. I thought them wonderfully well matched, for there was no moroseness in the man nor levity in the woman, and when Sunday came, and the little household, dressed in all their finery, baby and all, went out to church, it was a sight to behold.

A Cheerful Face.—There is no greater everyday virtue than cheerfulness. This quality in man among men is like sunshine to the day, or gentle, renewing moisture to parched herbs. The light of a cheerful face diffuses itself, and communicates the happy spirit that inspires it. The sourest temper most sweeten in the atmosphere of continuous good humor. As well might fog, and vapor, hope to cling to the sun-illumined landscape, as the blues and moroseness to combat jovial speech and exhilarating laughter. Be cheerful, always. There is no path but will be easier traveled, no load but will be lighter, no shadow on heart or brain but will lift sooner, in presence of a determined cheerfulness.

Poetry.—All poetry is but the reaching out of the soul—all painting, whether in words or colors—for something better, brighter, fairer than it has yet seen, but which imagination prophesies is yet to come. It sees brighter, more indestructible loveliness than this world contains, but even its disappointments and defeats foreshadow; and which will certainly come, or hope and faith and love would not be.

Sorrow.—There is, perhaps, no passion of the human mind so deleterious to bodily health as that of grief; especially when it is deeply seated and indulged. By enfeebling the whole nervous system, it depresses the motion of the heart, and retards the circulation of the blood. It preys upon the mind, as well as the body, and is nourished by indulgence to the utmost degree of excess.

A FEW WONDERS.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

I wonder if the man who ran
The race has got his ransom?
I wonder why a brawny hand,
Though large, should not be hand-some?

I wonder if the man who fell,
Was not a fall-ty fellow?
And if he didn't give a yell
Because his hair was yellow?

I wonder if the thing that's so
Could ever be more sore?
I wonder if the man you owe
Is any kin to oar?

I wonder if the traveler wan
Had very far to wander?
I wonder when he first began
If he wasn't quite a gander?

I wonder why they aren't at par—
All sermons of the parson?
And why the ones that never are
Are never burnt for arson?

I wonder if the man that's free
Could make a patent freezer?
And if the king of all the sea
Was not old Julius C. sir?

I wonder if the classic Thun
Has ever heard the thunders?
I wonder last, if any one
Will wonder at these wonders?

Washington Whitehorn's

ANSWERS TO

CONTRIBUTORS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

SIM PLICITY.—We are happy to announce that we are able to send your *fugitive* poem back to you.

SALLY RATUS asks it is proper for girls to chew gum? Of course, if you wish, you can turn your mouth into *wax-works*; that is one of the "Rights of Women."

DRIN KUR.—Cheap whiskey is the best antidote that we know of against drinking.

BEN ZEEN.—You can wake yourself early by reaching out at the appointed hour and ringing a little bell at your bedside.

SI GAR.—Horse-radish will scare away night-mares.

IMPATIENCE.—To learn patience depends on everybody's promises—and your own.

JOHN BAR LECORN.—Those physicians are quacks and you are a goose.

JOHN DORCH.—The late king of Abyssinia was a sweet-scented fellow because he was The odore.

VAG A. BOND.—Every man who wins your confidence is not a confidence man.

MUSE.—Your poem is declined with a great deal of respect.

DAN. D. LION.—If parties advertise to learn you how to make twenty-five dollars a day easily, you should not ask—why they ain't at it themselves? They humbly care only for the small profits.

MUSIC.—You are mistaken if you think there is no difference between a semi-quaver and a demi-john; neither do they figure on the same bar.

PADDY ORION.—If a lady faints and you can't be as cool as a frosted cucumber, get excited and knock over two or three chairs, then run your head through the window-sash and holla Fire! thieves! or murder, or all three together. If these fail to rouse the lady, or anybody else, get a bottle of hartshorn and put it to her nose; be sure in your haste that you have not taken the cork out. If this fails, hurry for a glass of brandy; drink it yourself. If this also fails, then hurry for a fan and sit down and fan yourself. If the lady still don't revive, then, as a last and desperate resort, whisper in her ear that she is mashing her bonnet. That'll start her pulses.

WIGGS.—Pencils were originally made in Pennsylvania.

D. SPARE.—You should have put more time on your article—say several years.

JACKSON CASE.—Your name is all right as long as they don't cut your first short.

L. A. MENT.—Your mythical poem "Sunff" is not to be sneezed at.

BELLE SHAZER.—"We met to part," has no good part in it.

METTA FIZZICKS.—Your poem on "Fate" has met its fate.

SING-SING.—Your poem, "Destiny," has met its destiny.

RAS KALL.—The penalty for such a theft as you speak of would be a fine of not more than ten nor less than one hundred dollars for the first offense; for each subsequent offense the sum would be reduced.

G. OLOGY.—A cave is a large hole driven whole into the side of a hill.

JACK O. NET.—We have read your "Fog" and would beg to ask if you hadn't one in your head when you wrote it?

A. PERN STRING wants to know how she can learn to "talk." Bless you, haven't you a mother?

ALVA BET.—To become a successful writer you will find that something more than a copy-book is necessary.

TAMIN A. SHREW.—The motto for you and your wife should be: "Two souls with but a married thought. Two fists that beat as one."

DAD RABBIT.—We return the "Drowning Man's Lament," and ask you how a drowning man can find time to arrange his last thoughts into verse? It's all bosh!

L. M. ENKO.—While your health is drunk be careful that you are not in a similar situation.

ANNIE MATION.—You can get a nice diamond cluster set for ten thousand dollars.

JIM SON.—Your article on St. Crispin is not very crisp in style.

RURAL.—The best way to eradicate moles is to catch them and cut their heads off.

ANN A. LIZA.—If you leave pimples alone they will come out themselves.

SOL O. MON.—The last place to look for a lost reputation would be in the place where you lost it. You would stand a better chance of finding it anywhere else.

DEAD BEAT.—A pawnbroker is a benevolent old individual, generally of the Hebrew persuasion, with whom you can leave anything from a diamond pin to a bootjack and get a little money as you wish. In polite circles he is called "my uncle." His nephews are numerous, and his discounts are large.

SCAL A. WAG.—A song for reflective toppers would be, "When we went a *tiptoeing*."

azure waves of the bay; the stars came out one by one, and went trooping across the heavens. Some of them had but just reached the zenith, and the late evening wind swept refreshingly among the leafy trees, when a slight figure glided through the doorway of the dwelling on the bay-shore, and up to the room occupied by the commandant. A dim light was burning feebly, scarce shedding any beam upon the corners of the room. Upon a low settee, wrapped in a light covering, and but partly divested of his uniform, lay in sound sleep, his handsome features turned from the intruder, Colonel Zarate. His profuse curls were brushed from his forehead, still fair and smooth, despite forty years of dissipation; the heavy mustache did not conceal the smile that played upon his lips; and as he lay there, all unconscious of the presence bending over him, a tear fell on his upturned face—a pearly tear, from the eye of the mysterious intruder.

Noiselessly turning away, she—his midnight guest—advanced to a small table, upon which stood a square tin box; she tried it, but found it locked. With a sad smile upon her face, she went to Zarate's coat, which lay carelessly over a chair, and without delay produced a tiny key, which she fitted to the lock. A moment, and the lid opened, exposing naught but papers. Nothing daunted, she pushed them aside, and touching an invisible spring under the lock on the inside, drew the bottom of the box out.

Under the false bottom were two drawers, the key of which was the same that unlocked the box. She opened one, and found it empty; she unfastened the other. That drawer contained the object for which she was searching. It was a key, rusty and heavy.

She placed it in her bosom, re-closed and re-locked the secret drawer, slid the false bottom to its place, and secured it by the spring. Carefully placing the papers as she found them, she fastened the lid, and returned the key to its former place.

All this time Zarate had slept quietly and undisturbed, all unconscious of the tear on his face, or of the silent presence. And now, her object accomplished, the lady again advanced to his side and gazed earnestly upon him. Her lips moved, but no sound escaped them; and her eyes seemed suffused with tears.

"Oh! Antonio—Antonio! how is your soul steeped in crime, blackened and seared almost past forgiveness. And yet, no! For she whom you most wronged has forgiven, and she will guard your innocent victim. Not for *your* sake, Antonio, will Helene be guarded, but for her own; she who little knows you, little knows the fearful accursedness of your love for her!"

He turned in his sleep, and in moving awoke. The lady drew back and slowly retired, pointing at her heart as she did so.

He rubbed his eyes and gazed after her. "Confound that she-devil! What did she want here, prowling around in her death-robes? 'Leota of the Ebon Mask,' she calls herself. Well, if I don't *unmask* her it will be strange!" and he settled himself to sleep again.

Down through the lower halls glided the nocturnal wanderer, to a dark, damp cellar, where were the cells of the prisoners. Up and down the ghostly corridor, lighted by the struggling rays of a meager light, trod the guard, a grim, sleepy-looking fellow. Up to his side glided the lady, and laid her hand on his arm.

"José, will you let me see your prisoner for a few moments? Your master has let me have the key, and I am at liberty to enter provided the sentinel offered no objection, which of course he would not be so ungallant as to do, particularly as I have brought a little gift."

She smiled and held out a generous flask of liquor. José eyed her suspiciously.

"It's all very well, ma'am, but I must say it looks queer."

"Why, José, how you talk! Surely you know me, José?"

"Well, yes, ma'am, I think I do. Ain't you the woman nobody knows and everybody knows?"

She laughed, and looked serious instantly.

"But, my man, I must see Signorina Valencie, now. May I pass?"

He hesitated.

"Here is the key, José, taken, as I said before, from your colonel. If he allows me to have the key, surely no soldier has a right to deny my authority. When he will permit me to enter, with your permission, of course, José, that is equal to a command. Besides, you can regale yourself with this until I return."

She stepped by, leaving the flask in his hand. Adjusting the key, and shooting back the bolt, she swung open the door and stood in the presence of Helene.

The maiden's cheeks were flushed with excitement.

"Then you are come! Oh, I am so thankful."

"Hush; the guard is just outside; be perfectly silent and in fifteen minutes you will be free."

"But how, tell me how, Leota, will we pass him?"

"I gave him rum; that rum is *drugged*, and no person can counteract its effects for many hours."

She peered cautiously out. Upon the floor, with the partly emptied bottle beside him, lay José, already overpowered by the potent drug. "Come, we can go now," and, supporting the trembling girl, Leota stepped past the unconscious guard, through the musty hall, up the stairs and out the door.

Helene was free, free as the air she breathed! (To be Continued.)

THE STRANGE OCCURRENCE

Upon which the author has founded his truly superb romance of the Great City, viz:

THE ACE OF SPADES,

is a marvel that has had an exact parallel in fact. That a lightning-flash should become equally the messenger of life and death is one of those occurrences which may be called a manifest interposition of Divine vengeance and Divine mercy.

I DEEMED I WAS FORGOTTEN.

HELEN L. BOSTWICK.

I deemed I was forgotten!
I thought those happy times,
When your voice thrilled o'er my heart-strings
Like music over rhymes,
Had made but transient tracings
On the tablet of your Past;
Had left but faint impressions,
Too fugitive to last.

I deemed I was forgotten;
Till on one golden day,
There came a white-winged birdie,
A-fluttering on its way;
I staid its snowy pinion,
And the song it sung to me,
Was a song of sweet remembrance—
Of tenderest constancy.

I deemed I was forgotten;
But I did not know the heart,
Whence memories pure and holy,
Once cherished, ne'er depart.
And though the form that shrines them,
I nevermore may see,
To know I'm not forgotten,
Is a joy of joys to me.

Hand, Not Heart:
OR,
THE DOUBLE BETROTHAL.

BY LENNOX WYLDER.

CHAPTER XXVII.
AN EMPTY TREASURY.

DELANEY HOWE listened intently for a moment. Then he placed his eye to the keyhole and peered through. A bright light was burning in the room, and St. Clair Arlington was reclining upon a table, evidently asleep, for he did not move.

Delaney Howe straightened up and struck the panel of the door again, at the same time turning the bolt several times with a rattle. Then he placed his eye again to the keyhole.

St. Clair Arlington had been aroused. He was looking around him, as a wild expression spread over his haggard face. But, without waiting, he rose to his feet, and drew near the door.

"Who's there?" he asked in a low voice. "A friend, Sainty, and you know his voice!" was the reply from Delaney Howe.

The door was opened, and Mr. Arlington stood there. He did not bid the other enter, but remained in the doorway, as he asked, in a stern voice:

"What do you want, Delaney Howe? It is very late, and I am worn out."

"I'll tell you what I want, Sainty, when I am inside," was the coarse reply. "I am tired, too," and pushing by the other, without ceremony, he entered the room.

Arlington frowned and glared after him. But he closed the door, locked it, and returned to his seat by the secretary without a word.

"You see, Sainty," resumed the young man, carelessly and independently, "I was just returning from the village, and thought I would stop in, for one or two reasons, of which one was to say 'how do you do?' and to be neighborly! And, Sainty, I accompanied Agnes home."

He watched the other keenly as he uttered the last words.

St. Clair Arlington started.

"Agnes! did you say, Delaney?"

"Yes. You see, I found her in strange company, and, considering the relationship existing between that fair maid and myself, why I thought I would see her safely housed here."

The frown on Mr. Arlington's face grew darker.

"Where, and in whose or what company did you find her, Delaney?" he asked.

"I saw her come from Clavis Warne's law-office, and I saw him and her talking earnestly inside. I watched her go there."

"Clavis Warne's office! My God! this is too bad! and—"

"That's what I thought, Sainty. I consider such conduct highly unbecoming, when I remember that Agnes Arlington is to be my wife one month from to-night."

"One month from to-night! Ay! I had forgotten! But, Delaney," he continued, speaking rapidly, "that will be the fourteenth, and, good heavens! it will be an anniversary! Did you think of that?"

Delaney started slightly, but the shade of alarm which had flashed over his face quickly fled away. He smiled a little scornfully, as he answered:

"I had not thought of it, Sainty. But, remember, old fellow, that will not be an unlucky anniversary for me! My good-luck began that night!"

Arlington pondered awhile before he replied. Then it was in a firm, decided voice.

"You can have your way, Delaney, and I can not say nay. But I can tell you one thing: that ceremony will not—shall not take place in this house. Do you understand that?" and he gazed the other unflinchingly in the face.

The rich man's words were very stern, and he evidently meant all he said.

For an instant, a dark flush of anger mantled Delaney's swarthy cheeks, and a venomous fire glittered in his eyes. But his face suddenly changed again, and he said, with a low laugh:

"Don't be alarmed, Sainty, especially before you are hurt! I have no intention of marrying Agnes Arlington here. That would necessitate display and expense, and I would save you that! I shall have the ceremony performed where no display will be expected—at my mother's. But, mark you, St. Clair Arlington, the day may come when I can bid you leave this house or remain in it, as may suit me!" and his eyes shot forth a sinister fire.

Mr. Arlington recoiled at his words, and a deadly pallor overspread his already haggard

face. Then, placing his hand in his bosom, he drew a pistol, and advanced threateningly upon the other.

In an instant, Delaney Howe was upon his feet: in another, the blue steel barrel of a pistol gleamed in his hands. The muzzle of that weapon covered St. Clair Arlington's forehead; Delaney Howe's finger was upon the trigger, and that trigger was creaking!

"Stand back, Sainty!" muttered the young man. "Advance a single step further, and I'll put a bullet through your brain!" and he still kept the pistol presented.

St. Clair Arlington paused suddenly. He saw danger in the other's eye. He slowly replaced his own weapon out of sight, and tottered back into a chair.

Delaney Howe dropped his pistol in his pocket, and likewise took his seat.

Several moments passed in silence—St. Clair Arlington leaning his head upon his breast—Delaney Howe watching him closely.

At length the rich man spoke, and his voice was very low, but firm.

"I tell you, Delaney, I don't like that visit of my niece to Clavis Warne's office. There's trouble in it; and I tell you, too, my friend, that a dark cloud is settling down around us! I feel it—and that cloud will—will—overwhelm us both! What shall we do?"

The young man did not speak at once, and it was evident what the other said had found an echo in his own bosom. His face first grew dark, and then paled. Then, as if a sudden thought had struck him, he said, with a faint attempt at a smile:

"You say 'we,' Sainty, too often. Did you think of that?"

"Nonsense, man! Did I not see the knife?—did I not hear the stroke as it fell?—did—"

"Enough—enough, Sainty! You are right! We must work together in this matter! But, matters are not so bad."

"They are bad, as long as Clavis Warne is in the way," said the other, pointedly, at the same time glancing significantly at Howe.

Delaney started just the least, and said:

"Clavis Warne may be out of the way before you or I know it, Sainty!"

His voice was very low.

"What mean you?" demanded the other, eagerly.

"Nothing now, Sainty; but wait! However, Sainty, I came for something else; I want money—I'm cleaned out again!"

Strange to say, St. Clair Arlington did not start this time. He showed no emotion whatever.

"So do I want money, Delaney—and I have none!" he said, as a bitter laugh curled his lip.

"But what I have I will share with you. I have now only eight hundred dollars—of all this immense fortune my brother—left me!"

"Is that true, Sainty? Can it be so?" exclaimed the other, a frown passing over his face.

"Before God, I mean it!" was the answer.

The young man saw that the other was speaking the truth—that he was in terrible earnest.

"A small sum to marry on, Sainty—to begin keeping house!" said Delaney Howe, with a bitterness in his tone. "And this being the case," he continued, "that the treasury is low—why the time has come when we must search around for the other, the big pile! It is somewhere and we shall and must find it! We are too deep into it now! That immense pile of gold and silver and plate is somewhere, and I believe it is in this house! Come, Sainty, there's no better time than now. We'll search for that gold—for gold to us now is life itself!"

St. Clair Arlington's face brightened.

"You are right, Delaney," he said, in a low voice. "You are right. Time is precious, and we must have gold! The hour is propitious, and we'll search thoroughly this night. This old mansion was built in other days, and it is filled with all sorts of odd closets, secret passages, and out-of-the-way places! And if the gold is here, by heavens, we'll find it!"

"And having found it, will divide, Sainty—don't forget it!" said Delaney Howe, with a grim, significant smile.

The other's face frowned slightly, but he replied promptly:

"I'll not forget anything I have promised, Delaney! Trust me for that! But, come, we'll get a lantern, and—the hour is late—we'll begin the search."

He reached up and lowered the light.

In a half-hour two dark figures cautiously emerged from the library-door into the hall.

In the hands of one flashed a dark lantern, partially screened.

CHAPTER XXVII.
SOMETHING FOUND.

THE two men—they were such—stole cautiously onward. Now and then they paused to listen; but no sound came to their ears. The old house was wrapt in profound quiet. The wind outside, which was driving the cold, gray snow-clouds along, moaned and sighed, and its sad pipings were the only sounds that echoed on the sleeping quiet of the old mansion.

The feet of those who trod so cautiously along were clad in gum shoes, and not the faintest echo did they give forth.

On they went, down the dark hall. At length they paused before a door at the further terminus of the passage. Here the men paused again, and listened.

Then, cautiously opening the door, they disappeared in the black entrance. They stood upon the landing of a flight of stairs—the staircase stretching dark and gloomy below them. Closing the door, they at once commenced the descent.

In a moment they were at the bottom, and then, with a sigh of relief, one of the men sprung the light of the dark-lantern full on. They were in the large cellar of the old mansion.

"We will begin here, Delaney," said one of the men, in a low, guarded voice, "and search upward. We may meet with good luck before going far."

Without another word, they commenced to grope around them. Every old nook and covey corner was examined: large heaps of old lumber, stowed there for kindling wood, were overturned; but, as yet, they had met with no success.

They paused for a moment—and consulted in a low tone together—and, then turning at once, reascended the stairs, and entered the hallway again.

The night was fast deepening, and the two prowlers paused not. Hurrying swiftly along, they reached the stair-case and ascended it, without stopping. Then, avoiding the inhabitable portion of the house, they sought the quaint old wings—the most ancient part of the building.

Then began a most thorough search. Every closet was ransacked, the walls of the rooms, the flooring and ceiling were sounded for secret ways, but all in vain. No missing treasure—no piles of gold—appeared.

The men paused.

"A bad job, Sainty!" said one, in a low voice.

"What's to be done?"

"Precious little more. There's the garret above; but nothing can be stowed away in that. The servants, too, keep their things there. We must give this up for to-night and try again! We can not give it up for good! That would be giving up all hope—nay, life itself! For what is there in this world worth living for, if we have not money! Come, Delaney, we'll go!"

The other did not answer.

Then the two night wanderers turned at once, and hurried away down-stairs, and took their way toward the library.

Little did St. Clair Arlington and his tool think that a dark figure had hung upon their steps, whithersoever they went, and when they had left the last room in the old deserted back-building, that this mysterious figure had emitted a low chuckle, and then crept silently up-stairs, and disappeared in the gloom of the lonely garret.

They were soon in the library. Mr. Arlington, lighting other tapers, flung himself, with an oath, into a chair. Delaney Howe remained standing. He glanced at the clock.

"Well, Sainty," he said, in a half-hurried manner, "the thing's up for to-night! I must go—but—we'll divide the eight hundred—according to agreement. Four hundred dollars are considerably better than nothing!"

Another oath escaped the lips of the rich man; but he was helpless in the hands of Delaney Howe.

"I see, my friend," he said, bitterly, "your memory is wondrously good! But, I'll get the money!"

"Good! I should think it was, Sainty, especially where money is concerned! Then I'm to be married, you know, old fellow—d'ye see?" and he laughed wickedly to himself.

St. Clair Arlington said not a word, but rising to his feet, disappeared around the angle of a book-shelf.

As soon as he had gone, Delaney Howe reached over suddenly, and strove to lift the lid of the secretary. But it was locked, and an expression of disappointment came over his face.

Just then St. Clair Arlington returned, bringing the money—as before—in gold and in notes. Then the money was quickly divided—each taking his share.

Delaney Howe, after stowing the gold and bank-notes about him, rose to his feet, and saying simply, "Good-night, Sainty—better luck next time!" turned at once and left the library by the rear door.

But he looked suspiciously behind him as he went—even after he had passed well into the dark plain—for he knew that St. Clair Arlington carried a wicked pistol in his pocket—that he was a good shot—and that the hour was late, and the night dark.

Whatever were his suspicions, nothing happened; and he strode along hurriedly over the plain. Suddenly the sharp rattle of a vehicle, as if driven rapidly, sounded ahead of him, in the direction in which he was hastening.

In an instant he had dropped on his knees under the gloom of one of the old poplars. He was not too soon, for concealment was an object with him.

He had scarcely sunk down, when a black, closed spring wagon, drawn by one horse, rolled rapidly by him.

As his eyes fell on the vehicle he started—then a low, quiet laugh burst from him.

"'Tis all right!" he muttered. "The 'Buccaneers' have overhauled some strange sail on the old cruising ground! That's all! And I'll see to-morrow."

In a moment more he was striding away, and then he was speedily swallowed up in the gloom.

St. Clair Arlington sat for an hour after Delaney Howe had left the library. He scarcely seemed to move, so absorbed was he in thought. But when the clock suddenly struck one, he started.

"Yes, I'll search again through the old box!" he muttered. "It was there I—I—found my first good luck—the will! The will? ha! ha! however, it served my purpose then! But the book—the book!" and he suddenly paused, as an anxious expression came to his face.

"Nevertheless, I'll look again!" he said, suddenly. "I am not sleepy, and—and—the sooner to work the better!"

So saying, he rose, and going to a small closet behind a book-case, he opened the door, and, stooping down, drew out what seemed an old tea-box.

Dragging it after him, he hauled it by his seat near the secretary, where the light from the chandelier would fall directly upon it.

He kicked off the old lid, and was about to stoop down, when something attracted his attention, and he paused as if shot.

It was a piece of paper—yellow with age—tacked to the bottom of the board he had just kicked from the top of the box.

St. Clair Arlington peered down at the piece of old paper. He scarcely seemed to breathe.

On the paper were the points of the compass marked down, and courses laid out, and at the bottom of it several lines in a bold, clear handwriting.

With nervous, yet cautious fingers, St. Clair Arlington dislodged the tacks, which held the paper, and taking the old parchment in his hand, he gazed at it with burning eyes. Then he muttered:

"I have found it! And—DELANEY HOWE! A BULLET IS IN MY PISTOL FOR YOU!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.
LOVING HEARTS AND LOVING HANDS.

WITHOUT waiting to be bidden, Clavis Warne turned the bolt, and entered the widow's home. He had seen a light in the window, and, as he stood by the door, had heard voices in the humble dwelling. He could not draw back; something seemed to impel him onward—to bid him look again upon Dora Howe.

Such had been his resolve for many weeks, nay months; but, that resolve he had never carried into execution. Once only, and that when it was whispered one evening in the village that Delaney Howe's crazy sister was dying, had he summoned courage to go near the home of poverty and distress.

The reader knows when that was, and how, at a sight of Agnes Arlington's pale face, Clavis Warne had turned and hurried away. But, long since he had determined in his mind on a course to take—long before this night now, when Agnes, in his own office, had urged him to the step. That was, to offer his heart, hand and fortune—as much as he possessed—to Dora Howe.

And now, this cold night, with the gray clouds scudding along, the raw wind sweeping in from the west, it did seem that Fate had directed his steps—that, to say the least, there was a providence in the circumstances of this autumn evening.

Seated in a large chair, close to the fire burning brightly on the hearth, was Dora Howe, thin, frail, yet transcendently beautiful. A light shawl was flung over her shoulders, and she was rubbing her hands together, and holding them toward the cheery blaze.

Near the girl stood the old mother, looking affectionately, yet sadly at her. She had just spoken some words in a low tone, as the rap sounded in the room. She paused as the door opened, and as her eyes fell upon Clavis Warne—to her a stranger, for she had never seen him—her face paled, and she shrunk away toward the chimney corner.

The young man paused. His heart was throbbing wildly; his brain was reeling. But, by an effort he controlled himself, and removing his hat respectfully, he said:

"Pardon me, Mrs. Howe—for such I take you to be—I am one who once knew your daughter Dora! I am—I am Clavis Warne."

"Clavis Warne! My God, sir! And what—"

At that moment the girl suddenly rose to her feet; her eyes, lustrous and black as night, were starting from her head. The well-remembered name had fallen upon her ear. Those beaming orbs fell on the young man's face, and then, with a wild cry, she tottered forward.

Another moment, and she had flung her arms around his neck, and her head sunk upon his shoulder. Clavis Warne drew her frail form close to his breast, and his eyes were lit up by an almost holy fire. He pressed his lips to hers in one long, ardent kiss. That token of love brought life back to the fainting maiden.

Still clinging to him, her eyes full of love and yearning, her warm breath upon his cheek, she murmured:

"The good God be thanked, Clavis, that you have come again! Come again to cheer my lonely heart, and to chase the shadows from my brain! Here, mother, here he is! Here is my darling, mother! and he has come back now, never to leave me again! Clavis! Clavis! is it not so, darling?" and her eyes burned with a wild look of inextinguishable love into his.

Clavis Warne's eyes were wet with tears; his noble heart was swelling with emotion; and, as a heavenly glow shot over his frame, he felt that God had sanctioned his late resolve. He loved Dora Howe—poor, crazy thing—at that moment with an earnestness, an enthusiasm, bordering on intoxication!

Again he drew her to his bosom; again, regardless of the presence of the bewildered old woman, he rained kisses upon her face, and smoothed back her glossy hair with his hot, nervous hand.

"What does this mean, sir?" at length asked the poor mother, scarcely crediting her senses.

"It means, my dear madam, that, after a weary pilgrimage in life, after many heart-aches and trials, troubles and storms, my heart has at last found its mate!" exclaimed the young man, with a wild enthusiasm in his words, and fire flashing in his eyes. "I have come, my dear mother—I can call you so—to take Dora to my heart, to restore her to reason, to have her and love her as my darling wife! I have come to say that, after a while, I will take her and you from this house of poverty to my own home, where we can live happily together!"

As he spoke he gently unwound the girl's arms from his neck, and leading her to a seat, sat down by her side. He took her thin hand tenderly in his, and spoke to her low, sweet words of veriest music.

We need not recall what followed—the warm, earnest words of Clavis Warne—the innocent, trusting, half-wild, wandering baby-talk of Dora Howe—the frequent and subdued "Thank Gods" of the weeping mother! We draw the curtain on the scene.

Two hours of uninterrupted bliss ensued. At the end of that time, Clavis Warne rose reluctantly, said good-night to the old mother, and, promising to call often, went out. He was soon hid in the gloom, nor did he notice that a white form stood in the door of the little cottage and gazed yearningly after him, as he was swallowed up in the darkness.

Clavis Warne strode on; his heart was light, and his soul was filled with rejoicing. Suddenly he paused, as a dark object loomed up ahead of him. The young man hastily felt in his pocket; but, to his chagrin, found that in changing his coat, before he left his office, he had omitted to take the pistol. He paused.

Warne was not a timid man, but he was wary. He knew that, as he termed it, he was "in the enemies' country." So he paused, and gazed ahead.

There it was—that something—black and motionless. The young man felt that something was wrong. Without hesitating long, he turned as if to retrace his steps by the widow's, and to pursue his way to the village along the old stage road.

Just as he made a step, however, in that direction, he was struck suddenly from behind, a fierce blow upon the head. He went down like an ox. Instantly two men sprung upon him, bound him, gagged, and, dragging along a half-dozen paces, flung him heavily into a close-covered wagon. In a moment more the vehicle was jolting rapidly away.

Gradually consciousness returned, but he could not speak, nor could he move. On rattled the wagon. Then it entered a lonely, black road in the midst of a forest, where it halted.

The men came around, and dragging the helpless man rudely from the vehicle, they grasped him in their arms, and bearing him between them, plunged right into the woods. His hands and face were torn by the briars, but the men who bore him heeded it not.

Suddenly they stood upon a small path, almost imperceptible in the gloom. They glanced around them for a moment, and again plunged into the thick bushes.

At length they entered a dark cave, and cast their burden heavily upon the cold earth. Such was the shock that the young man's consciousness forsook him entirely.

When he recovered his senses, he was chilled through and through. He glanced around him, but the darkness was absolutely inky. He could not see an inch before his face. Suddenly a wild, Bacchanalian song, coming as it were from the depths of the earth, far beyond him, smote on his ear.

Clavis Warne shivered, and his heart sunk within him. We can not describe the feelings that held place in his bosom.

The time flew by—a half-hour, then an hour. From sheer exhaustion, despite his terrible position and surroundings, Clavis Warne's eyes closed; his senses were slipping away, and a deep sleep was creeping over him.

Suddenly, a twig snapped at the mouth of the cave. Instinctively the young man opened his eyes and glanced thitherward. A feeling of irrepressible awe spread over him, as his gaze fell upon a white, moving object.

On came that object—slowly, carefully. Then it paused by the side of the helpless man.

"Hist! Clavis! It is I—Dora! I knew the Black Wagon! Speak not, darling, when I remove the cruel gag. They who would murder you, at the least provocation, are not twenty paces away! I know them! Wait one moment until I remove the gag and unbind you, and then follow me! And, as you value life, breathe not a word."

In a moment Clavis Warne felt the thongs removed from his ankles; then the gag was drawn from his mouth. He staggered to his feet. The poor girl laid her hand gently upon his arm, and whispered:

"Now, my own Clavis, follow without a word!"

As she spoke, she turned and glided from the dark cave out into the gloomy woods, and the young man followed close in her footsteps. On they went, the girl leading the way, as one thoroughly acquainted with it. At the end of a half-hour Dora paused.

They had entered the broad stage-road.

"We part here, Clavis," she said, in a low tone, her words, as they had been all along, perfectly rational. "Yonder, where you see the black group, lies Labberton. Go thither. I will return home, or mother will be uneasy about me; and I fear Delaney. Now, Clavis, a word before we part. Bloodhounds are upon your track! Be wary. When the day shines to-morrow be not known as Clavis Warne. I know you understand me! One more kiss, Clavis, and good-night!"

In a moment she had flung her arms around his neck; in another, she was gone, speeding along in the gloom.

The next day, early in the morning, Clavis Warne quietly took down the sign from the window-sill and settled for his rent. He requested, however, that his trunk be allowed to remain in the house.

The office was not long without a tenant, for that very evening an old man, who said he gave lantern-shows and tableau-entertainments, applied for the room, and obtained it.

He was a stranger to all.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SHOWMAN'S LATE VISITOR.

TIME rolled on; the last of the Fall months went out with driving winds and gray-winged snows; and December was ushered in, icy and bleak.

The young lawyer, Warne, had disappeared from all eyes. The old man still occupied the room recently in possession of the young lawyer; but he had no visitors, and always kept himself to himself. He spent most of his time with a magic lantern, getting the proper light, the right distance, and the correct clearness. Strange to say, the objects which showed on the transparent curtain before the magnifying lens of the lantern, were scribbled sheets of paper.

Day by day the old man amused himself thus, and then it was given out by his landlord that the old showman was to give an exhibition. But no hall in Labberton was then suitable, and the landlord had suggested that Mr. Arlington, of the manor, would gladly allow the exhibition to be held there, and that, if the old man wished it, he (the landlord) would see the worthy gentleman, and get his permission.

The old showman had started at this; and then, as his eyes—singularly young and brilliant for one so aged—flashed out, he laughed a low, contented laugh, and acknowledged his thanks in his squeaking voice, saying, at the same time, that, from what he had learned, the large parlor

at the mansion would be the very place for his purpose.

Strange to say—and yet not strange, for we are not attempting to deceive the reader—on more occasions than one, a frail female figure had entered, at night always, what was recently the law-office of Clavis Warne. But, she did not remain long, and when she left, one night, the low light in the hallway revealed the wan, pale, yet beautiful face of Dora Howe, the mad girl.

Late one night, the old man—whom the reader must know to be Clavis Warne—sat by his desk. The room was in deep darkness, but the brilliant bull's-eye of the magic lantern was shining full on the stretched curtain of white muslin beyond.

The old man—as we shall continue to call him for awhile—cautiously took up an object-glass, obscured the light for a moment, and then suddenly flashed it full on again.

Instantly on the curtain large, well-defined letters stood out, reading singularly disconnected, and without meaning for the entertainment of an audience.

The old man, scarcely breathing, looked on. Then he fitted another plate, and flashed the light on once more.

This time, likewise, it was writing which showed on the curtain; but it seemed to be the reflection of a large, entire sheet, whereas the other had torn, ragged edges. This time, too, what stood out so boldly had a meaning; in it was absorbed all that had appeared from the first plate.

And again the showman gazed long and steadfastly at the motionless letters.

"'Twill do! 'Twill do well!" he muttered; "and now—"

"There is no need to fail, CLAVIS WARNE!" said a low, calm voice at his elbow.

In an instant the showman turned; like lightning he sprung upon the little bent figure which stood by him, then his strong, nervous hand was upon the other's throat, and he pushed him backward upon the table.

"Hold! hold! Clavis Warne!" gasped the other in a gurgling breath. "You would strangle your best friend! There, lean down, and I will tell you who I am!"

Clavis Warne, metamorphosed into a showman, tremblingly released his hold, and bent his ear down. The other whispered a few words to him, at a low breath.

The young man started violently, and reaching up, hastily turned the light on.

"You! You! My God, I thought you were dead!"

"No, no, young man; and I am come now to help you—to be present at the show—to be a witness in a tableau—to furnish you material for that tableau!"

Then the young man disguised took the old bent figure in his arms, and drew him to his breast.

"Thank God that you have come!" he muttered; "and now, we'll work together!"

"Ay! to the end, Clavis Warne! You can be trusted to the death. But, the night is fleeting. I have startling revelations to make, and I can tell you we have hard work before us, for the ground is frozen. But, we must work, for the fourteenth is one week from to-night. Verily, the Time draws nigh!"

Clavis Warne once again lowered the light, and then, between him and his singular visitor, there ensued a long and an earnest conversation, lasting until the small hours of the morning.

When that conversation was ended, the strange old creature, who had so mysteriously made his appearance, said:

"Then, to-morrow night will be the time. It must not be postponed later! And it is dangerous now in the mansion for me. I must stay with you for a time."

The old creature slept that night, a sweet, dreamless sleep, upon the lounge in the office of the showman.

(Concluded in our next.)

Duke White:

OR,

THE GREEN RANGER OF THE SCIOTO.

BY CHARLES E. LA SALLE,
AUTHOR OF "BURT BUNKER, THE TRAPPER."

CHAPTER X.

THE WEARY TRAMP.

LIZZIE RUSHTON was very fleet of foot, and when she started across the clearing, she ran at her topmost speed, glancing around her to see whether she was observed or not.

And so it happened that she had run but a short distance when she discovered her swifter-footed pursuer coming close behind her. She called into play every energy, but the savage surpassed her, and she beheld his rapid approach with a despairing heart.

At this critical moment, Mrs. Rushton fired her rifle, which, as we have shown, although aimed at random, and, in fact, scarcely aimed at all, struck the Wyandot and dropped him dead in his tracks.

Hope sprung up again as Lizzie hurried away, but it was short-lived. Almost immediately, she detected two other Indians bearing down upon her with the same speed as the first.

She struggled bravely, but it was of no use. She had gone but a few rods when her arm was rudely seized in the gripe of one of the red-skins, who brought her to a stop so suddenly that she was nearly thrown to the ground.

"Ugh! stop!" he commanded, in an angry voice, as he swung her around, so that her pale, terrified face was brought almost against the hideous, painted countenance of the Indian, gleaming with fury.

Fortunate for Lizzie Rushton, she knew nothing, at the time, of how narrowly she escaped recapture by her friends. At the moment the Wyandots turned off from the path and plunged

into the woods, the bordermen from the block-house were less than a hundred yards distant.

The whites hurried forward, and a few seconds later passed near the spot and then stumbled over the dead body of the red-skin, a short distance beyond, that had been slain by the bullet of Mrs. Rushton.

It will be understood that the main body of the Wyandots remained near the house, while a few followed after and captured the fair fugitive. Shortly after the attack of the settlers, all the surviving Indians reunited, having the captive with them.

The point of union was about a hundred rods from the house, the red-skins easily finding each other by means of the signals in vogue between them.

So hastily had the fight been made, that they were not given time to carry away their own dead, and the fury with which the bordermen charged down upon them, very naturally gave them the impression that they were attacked by a force double what it really was.

As they had a prisoner with them they had every reason to believe that they would be pursued. So stinging was the defeat to which they had been subjected, that several were in favor of tomahawking her upon the spot; the more prudent counseled letting her go, as they well knew they would be pursued by a powerful party, who might make them pay dearly for the abduction.

The single Wyandot who exercised the controlling power, decided that the captive should be taken with him.

"What cared he for pursuit?" he replied, to their expressed apprehensions.

No successful pursuit could be made during the darkness, and they had thus secured some six hours' start, which, it was not unreasonable to suppose, were amply sufficient to keep them out of the reach of the most skillful trailers.

The emotions by which Lizzie Rushton was swayed, all this time, it would be difficult to depict. All the Wyandots seemed to possess quite a knowledge of the English tongue, and now and then a disjointed exclamation gave her an idea of what was going on, and the purport of their conference.

She had the consolation of feeling certain that her mother had escaped. The report of guns and the shouts told her when the attack was made and what it meant. She saw that, had she remained with her mother, (and had the gun been discharged) she would have been safe at this time, and she thanked Heaven that, whatever might be the trials in store for her, her beloved parent was saved from them, and she only had to bear them alone.

None of the Indians were mounted, and it seemed as if they were operating independently of the main body, that had been so handsomely repulsed by Captain Chapman and his men up the river.

After the short and somewhat stormy conference, the Wyandots plunged into the wood, moving toward the north-west, which was the direction of their hunting-grounds. They walked quite rapidly, fully appreciating the value of all the distance that could be gained.

There being but little light in the sky, the woods in most of the places were in such profound darkness that Lizzie Rushton could scarcely see the forms of her captors; but she knew they were all around her; she could hear the fall of their moccasins upon the dry autumn leaves, and the guttural, exclamatory manner they had of talking.

She listened intently, in the hope of learning something of their intentions, but she heard not a word in her own tongue, which was all natural enough, and made her wonder that they should have used any intelligible words, before starting upon this journey.

More than once our heroine meditated an attempt to escape. As she looked about her in the dense gloom, she was certain that if she could get a start of a rod or so, she could elude the swift-footed Wyandots "on their own ground."

But how was the start to be gained?

As all depended upon this same "start," so it seemed that the Indians had taken every precaution against its being obtained.

When she had almost decided to make the "leap for life," and was hesitating and nearly ready, at that instant she was sure to touch one of the red-skins with her hand or foot, proving how futile such an attempt necessarily would be.

Appreciating how utterly she was in the power of her captors, she made an attempt to conciliate them, in some degree, toward herself. She asked a few simple questions in her language, questions that she was sure could give no offense, and to which she was certain some answer would be made.

So there was, and of so gruff and repelling a character that she gave over all efforts to win the good opinion of those, who, it may be said, were almost incapable of feeling.

Lizzie was favored with robust health, and it was no task for her to keep pace with the Wyandots, who walked with a long, loping gait, that was quite rapid and tiresome to one not accustomed to it.

In the confusion of getting ready to move, she had deferred her supper, and upon the arrival of Elijah Lamb had forgotten all about it, and so it happened that she had none at all—a fact not calculated to inspire her with hope for strength on the long journey, knowing, as she did, that her subsistence for some time was likely to be uncertain.

It was a wearisome tramp to the girl, who could not free herself of the reflection that every minute she was going further and further away from home and its loved one.

What a strange fatality appeared to have followed them during the last twenty-four hours!

Had the attack been deferred for one night, there would have been none to attack. Had it taken place earlier, Captain Chapman, her own brave, her devoted and true lover, would have been at home, and would have come down like a thunderbolt upon the Indians, and made them pay dearly for the attempted outrage.

And then, as by a natural transition, her thoughts reverted to Elijah Lamb, and she compared the two!

Up to this time she had entertained a sort of friendship for the man. Although she had little respect for, yet it can not be said that she had really despised him.

But now she did. Her own common sense told her that if he had remained in the building, firing the rifle at the first Indian that showed himself, the rescue would have come in the same manner that it had, and without bad results to any one except the Indians themselves.

But, leaving out the ultimate results of the desertion, the mere fact of a man, who was given the opportunity of defending a couple of women, stealing out of the window, and groping away, caring nothing for them, was a piece of poltroonery so thoroughly despicable, that Lizzie felt she could scarcely endure the sight of him again.

"And he has really said, and I suppose believes, that I am willing to call him husband!" she mused, as she walked along. "If I ever return, and he approaches me, what an awakening I will give him—the cowardly sneak!"

Onward, onward, through the dark forest hurried the band of Wyandots. Sometimes the woods were open, and then again so dense that the girl experienced some difficulty in making her way through it.

She had given over the intention of attempting to escape. She saw that she was so closely watched and guarded, that there was no earthly prospect of success, and the result of such an essay most likely would be unpleasant to her to say the least.

No personal indignity had yet been offered her, and she had no wish to provoke the Indians to it. Her arms were unbound, and should occasion demand it, she was thus at liberty to put forth any exertion in her own behalf.

No streams were crossed, and when morning dawned the Wyandots were still threading their way through the forest.

But, by the earliest streak of light, a human bloodhound was upon their trail!

CHAPTER XI.

HEAD TRAILING.

WHEN morning succeeded the attack, the Yankee found his situation in the settlement any thing but a pleasant one.

The tissue of falsehoods which he intended to "swear through," was effectually spoiled by the arrival of Mrs. Rushton, who, telling her narrative, was implicitly believed, and he was universally regarded as the despicable coward which he really was.

He encountered such expressions of contempt at every turn, that he began to think it best to leave the village for a while until the storm could blow over.

This annoyance began during the evening, and was only partially stayed by the arrival of the celebrated ranger, Duke White, to whom the tragic occurrence became known, and to whom all instinctively turned for advice in this moment of perplexity.

The proposition was made by several to form a party to go in pursuit, and recapture the girl by the superior prowess of arms; but the noted scout, who has long since been introduced to the reader, vetoed the whole scheme.

He showed them in a few minutes that their suggestion, if carried out, would only result in injury to the very one whom they were seeking to rescue. Going through the woods in such a large body and the Wyandots expecting pursuit, they would be certain to discover them, and the fight would become one in which the advantages would be about evenly balanced. Should the Indians see that they could not retain their captive, there was not one among them who would hesitate to sink his tomahawk into her brain.

"I'll go it alone!" said the scout. "I've been on the trail afore, and I'll follow the varmints to thar holes. Ef thar's any way of smokin' out the gal, Duke White will do it."

"Don't you want any company?" asked one of the men who had gathered around him.

"Thar's only one man that I'd take," replied the ranger.

"Who's that?" ventured several.

"Baa—baa—baa! otherwise, Lamb!"

This name was pronounced in jest by one of the bystanders, and it produced a hearty laugh, which lasted several minutes.

"No," replied Duke, when the tumult had partly subsided, "he ain't the chap. Come to think, thar ar' two that I'd jist as lief have as not. One of them is that dried-up copper-skin, they call Pee Wit, and t'other is young Captain Chapman."

It seemed natural enough to all that he should desire the company of the veteran trailer, the Shawanoe, whose fame was known all along the border; but it was not exactly clear what good the young captain could do him, brave and daring as all acknowledged him to be.

"He's so interested in the gal," added Duke, answering their questioning looks, "that he'll be too uneasy to stay anywhar else than on her trail. I pity him, and then, really, the fact of it is, young Chapman is a good feller, and I like him."

It was scarcely daylight when Duke White, alone, sought out the trail of the flying Wyandots, and having assured himself as to their number, and the general course taken by them, he started upon his long and eventful hunt after the missing girl.

But he was not doomed to make it alone, even for so short a distance; for he was only fairly in the woods when Elijah Lamb crossed his path.

"Hullo! what's the matter with you?" asked the scout, looking up in no little surprise. "I've been watching and follering you."

"What fur?"

"I'm going with you."

Duke stood a while, unable to express his amazement; then a sudden whim came over him to take the young man along, of course with no idea that he would be of any earthly use, but for amusement and companionship.

He felt confident that when they got upon critical ground, he could do as he chose with him. So, with his characteristic silent laugh, he said: "Come on, then."

"They think I ain't brave," muttered 'Lije to himself, but loud enough for the ranger to hear him. "Jest give me a chance and I'll show 'em."

A day's tramp through the woods, followed by a second day, brings us to the incidents of our opening chapter.

The reader will recall the separation of the two, as Duke crossed over to reconnoiter the peninsula—the adventure or misadventure of Lamb with the canoe—the encounter of the ranger with the Shawano scout—and the accidental meeting of Duke, 'Lije and Pee Wit.

It was dark night as the trio stood together in the forest to decide upon the best course to pursue.

Pee Wit explained in his broken way how he came upon the trail of the two men during the afternoon, and recognized that of his white friend, and had pressed forward, coming up to them very opportunely in time to prove of no little service, to Duke White especially.

"It's a bad go—a powerful bad one," said the latter, as he reviewed the situation.

"Jewhilkens! I think you have been very lucky," said 'Lije, who was of the opinion that he, too, had had a most narrow escape; "you couldn't have come much nigher getting killed, without going under entirely."

"Dat so," assented Pee Wit. "Greenhorn speaks straight!"

"Greenhorn! ye red-faced varmint! Don't ye say so to me!" cried the Yankee.

"Yah! much big greenhorn, as Duke call 'em!"

"I'll—I'll—I'll see about this, Mister Pee Wit, and I'll—"

"Dry up, 'Lije!" commanded Duke, and then he added, as answering the Indian's remark:

"I know, I know, but you see the varmints have found out that we're on thar tracks. They'll keep a clusser watch nor ever. So, it'll make it a powerful sight harder to git at the gal than if they didn't s'picion we war so clus."

This was all true, but there was no remedying it, except by superior skill and strategy.

It was rather curious that neither Pee Wit nor Duke had yet gained a fair view of the Wyandots, and thus had failed to gain any thing additional regarding their hapless captive.

It was therefore determined that the reconnaissance should be completed before they left the neighborhood. 'Lije was placed in a secure hiding-place, where he almost immediately fell into a sound slumber, and they started out upon their perilous duty.

It was accomplished successfully by both in the course of the following hour. They gained a good view of the Indians, as they were encamped under a large tree, and saw Lizzie Rushton seated upon the ground, her arms unbound, but so surrounded by her captors that there was no possibility of communicating with her.

She sat with her head leaning against a tree, and seemed to be in a doze, apparently from the long deprivation of sleep and from the fatigue to which she had been subjected.

Having carefully scanned the party, so as to be certain of their exact strength, the scouts withdrew, and reunited at the rendezvous, where Lamb still lay in profound slumber.

Here Pee Wit and Duke spent a few minutes in consultation, and then decided to move on and keep ahead of the Wyandots, so as really to reverse the position of pursued and pursuer. It was called head trailing, and was not unfrequently resorted to by the skilled rangers.

There was wisdom in this course now, for, the Indians having discovered that a party was upon their trail, they would be certain to think that its members were behind them, instead of before, and the rear would be scrutinized more narrowly than the front.

It rested with the scouts to conceal their whereabouts from their enemies, and this could be done only by keeping off their direct route, so as to prevent their paths from crossing.

Their course of action decided upon, the two were not the men to hesitate. 'Lije was aroused from his slumber, and the three renewed their tramp through the silent forest.

Fortunately for them the Scioto made such a bend that they were not compelled to cross it again, and they continued their journey upon dry land.

Hour after hour they pressed forward, and by daylight a goodly number of miles separated them from the Wyandots. They halted as they needed something in the way of nourishment. Pee Wit had no difficulty in bringing down a deer, from which a most luscious and excellent breakfast was made.

They had kindled a fire, in a spot where the wood was open, and near a dense mass of shrubbery and undergrowth or thicket. The meal was eaten in silence, and, at its conclusion, Duke White suddenly raised his head, and exclaimed, in a whisper of alarm:

"'Lije, see here!"

"What is it?" he asked, with a shiver of vague terror.

"Do you see them bushes yender?"

"How can I help see them?"

"Wal, I want you to go through them."

"What fur?"

"I think thar's somebody in thar."

Elijah stared at him, as if he did not know what he meant. The ranger was really in earnest, but the Yankee believed he was jesting, and he thought it a good chance to demonstrate his own courage.

"You want the thickest reconnoitered, I suppose?" he asked, pompously.

"Yas; will you do it?"

"Of course; it will give me great pleasure to do it. Shall I shoot any Indian if I see him?"

"Sartinly. Give us a taste of yer quality as a scout."

"Very well; wait till I come back," said Lamb, moving in the direction of the undergrowth.

Duke White understood him, and he grinned, and muttered:

"He thinks thar ain't no one thar, but thar is, and he'll git one of the biggest scares of his life."

(To be Continued.)

Lost and Won.

BY FANNY FIELDS.

"NEVER."

It was a short, concise answer that Archy Brevoort gave to the question put him, and as he spoke there came a curl of scorn to his haughty lips.

"You are a trifle tragical, now, aren't you, boy? There seems to me no necessity for such an impassioned asseveration. If you don't intend to marry Florence Merle, simply say so."

And Vane Hamilton's blue eyes beamed with roguish mischief as he scrutinized the dark, handsome face beside him.

"Simple or tragical, it's all the same. I never intend to ask her to marry me."

"You're a curious individual, a perfect enigma! What, in the name of all that is chivalrous, do you suppose Miss Merle will think of your attentions the last three months? Everybody thinks you are engaged; what will she think when you 'break' with her?"

"I can't help what she thinks. I don't know that I care—"

"Oh, yes you do, though. Come, now, Arch, be reasonable while I ask you a few plain questions."

The merry light in Vane Hamilton's eyes gave place to a serious shade as he continued, regardless of Archy Brevoort's lowering countenance.

"Old fellow, you are striving against a love you feel in every fiber of your heart; that throbs in every breath you draw. Why, then, when you love Florence Merle as you do—when you have every reason to suppose she cares just as much for you—will you so insanely cast away every vestige of a happy future from you?"

Archy, you're doing wrongly."

Vane's fearless blue eyes were flashing with the earnestness of the sentiments he was advancing. A cold smile sprung to Brevoort's eyes, a smile that did not move his lips, a smile that was satirical in its look and meaning.

"You're an eloquent agent for the fair Miss Merle. I give you all due credit for it, while I beg to change the topic of our conversation."

"No. You are suffering—maybe you'll sneeringly deny it, Archy—and if I can help you, I am going to do it. Won't you let me? We've been friends too long to permit trouble to visit one, without sympathy from the other."

Vane's voice grew almost womanly in its sweetness, and proud, haughty, reserved though he was, Archy Brevoort felt that it touched him, and, for perhaps the first time in his life, he uncovered his heart.

"Suffering, Vane Hamilton? May you never experience a tithe of what I do. And it's all for the love of Florence Merle—poor Florence!"

There was a plainly discernible sarcasm in the last two words that Hamilton could not avoid observing.

"Why, man, can it be, can it be you are going to give up that woman because she has no money?" In extremest amazement, not unmingled with indignation, Vane spoke.

A conscious blush for the obvious shame of the thing tinged Archy's face.

"Even so. I can not afford to take a wife on the pitiful income I receive. I must live in splendor, and—"

"And your wife must pay for it."

Vane Hamilton's metallic voice rung sharply as he answered, and Brevoort felt the contempt in his tones.

"If you've a mind to word it so, yes. Certainly Florence Merle can't do that."

Vane Hamilton's lips curled when he answered:

"I, too, am a poor man, whose salary is a hundred dollars less than yours; and yet, did I love that woman as I thought, till this moment, you did, I'd marry her, and give her a home where love should rule, not money."

Brevoort laughed.

"Sentiment, forsooth! Yet, whether you believe me or not, I love her as I never shall love woman again; and still she shall never be any thing to me. Hamilton, I tell you, I must marry an heiress."

Vane's eyes were flashing scorn, and he asked, sneeringly:

"And who may the honored lady be?"

Archy whistled.

"That's cool! As if I must be made to confess to you, my conscientious priest."

Then, dropping his half-angered, half-bantering tone, he continued:

"Miss Leah Chester—you know her, Vane, the West Fourteenth street heiress—has invited me to call this evening."

Hamilton's eyes never moved from Brevoort's face.

"And you'll go? Go with the love for one woman in your heart, and deliberately seek to gain another, because she wears diamonds and velvets?"

Archy Brevoort's eyes fired fiercely, and he tapped the floor nervously with his foot; then, with a defiant nod, he returned Vane Hamilton's sternly-put query.

"I am going."

The departing rays of a glorious June sunset were flinging their tremulous golden arrows across the emerald lawn, and glinting among the tall birches, till they came in floating flecks of light through the stained glass window and draping lace curtains of the library at Birchwood.

Sitting near an open casement, where the soft sweet air lifted the tiny, clustering curls from her fair forehead, Florence Merle was struggling with a bitter agony, a poignant grief, the shadow of which falling on her beautiful face had made it pitiful in its stricken sadness, that chased the joyous light from her eyes, leaving deep shadows brooding in their amber-clear depths.

For a moment longer the battle went on; her mouth quivered with the fierceness of the conflict within, and her fingers were clenched in a cold clasp. Then a flush rose swiftly to her cheeks, and a glitter to her eyes.

With a strange, sweet dignity she turned to the gentleman leaning against the window, who was watching her intently, a yearning look in his bronze-brown eyes, that was oddly at variance with the sneering smile on his handsome lips.

"Mr. Brevoort," and her voice quivered just a trifle as she uttered the name, "I need not say I am surprised, hurt, by this peculiar interview. Notwithstanding which, I comply with your request. From this moment we are acquaintances."

"Florence—I beg your pardon, Miss Merle—it is hardly necessary for me to assure you how exceedingly painful it is to me to be obliged to ask you to release me from the delightful privilege of a near friend. I can never forget the past three months with their freight of happiness."

A sudden spasm of pain crossed Florence's face; then it resumed a colder, sterner expression than Archy Brevoort had ever seen there before.

"Do not speak of it again. If it was pleasant then you can have nothing to regret. If the future be as delightful, your purposes—whatever they are—will doubtless be accomplished."

There was a far-off bitterness in her tone, and Brevoort started when he heard her speak, a guilty flush reddening his dark cheek.

"You do not insinuate, Florence—"

"Miss Merle, in the future, if you please, sir."

He bit his lip at the cool reproof, and turned to the door.

"A moment, Mr. Brevoort. I am aware that my position as an unpretending music-teacher is not as exalted as some persons would wish; yet, I am thankful to have escaped even the friendship of one who measures a true affection by gold."

He made no reply; but bowed.

"Good-evening, Miss Merle."

"Good-by, Mr. Brevoort."

The door closed upon him, and she turned away, her eyes full of tears, her sweet mouth quivering with pain.

"And this is the end, the end of all my dreams—all my hopes!"

Wearily she sighed, as she laid her hot cheek against the cold marble Psyche.

"He has virtually rejected me—me who loved him so fondly! Oh, the shame, the shame, to be wooed so easily—to be cast aside so soon! And I know, I am a poor music teacher, and Leah Chester is rich!"

She clasped her hands in a grip that betrayed the intensity of her pride—her humiliation, her wounded love.

After that, no word escaped her, and when, an hour after, pale, a trifle reserved, and with a strange gleam in her eyes, she joined the family circle, no one even dreamed of the bitter secret locked between her lips.

The drawing-room at Lakeside Villa was ablaze with light, that frosty October night, and Archy Brevoort, as he rode up the moonlit road, felt his heart throb with anticipation of the time when, as his wife's, it would be his, for he had come to-night to ask Leah Chester to marry him.

True, he never could cease loving fair Florence Merle; true it was that he never expected to love Leah Chester; but then the money made up for it all. Had Florence been rich—But that would have been too fortunate; he dared not even try to think how supremely blessed he would have considered himself. And yet, despite Florence Merle's poverty, he could not repress an envious sigh when he thought how happy and proud Vane Hamilton was since he had become engaged to her.

Leah Chester was not a handsome woman—scarce pretty; yet there was a stately repose of manner about her that many a finer might have envied. To-night, in this calm consciousness of her position, she looked very lady-like, very refined, and, Archy Brevoort tried to think, very beautiful. She certainly did not look ill, in her trailing robe of claret-hued plush, with a white shawl drooping from her slender shoulders.

She met him with a smile of welcome.

"Your coming is remarkably opportune, Mr. Brevoort; I am momentarily expecting a couple of friends I think you will be pleased to meet."

"Your friends, Miss Chester, I am ever glad to see. Might I inquire who they are? Are they strangers to me?"

"Oh, no. Old friends, I think."

There was a lingering of something in Miss Chester's tone that jarred on Archy Brevoort's ear. It was not in a taunting voice she spoke—it was not altogether honest, and yet not unpleasant. He was wondering what she meant, when he saw her quickly leave her post by the window and hasten to the door, herself to perform an office that the polite colored man performed for him.

He heard laughing voices in the hall, and, as the trio entered the room, his heart gave a bound when he recognized the queenly figure of Florence Merle, one arm linked in one of Vane Hamilton's, the other thrown around Leah Chester's waist.

They did not observe him, and he gazed on her for the first time since he had left her that evening, when he had almost crushed her young spirit. He left her, he feared, in such a manner as gave him little hope he might ever again claim even an acquaintance. Now, in her radiant face, he saw traces of a beauty he might never call his own; he saw she was nobler, more beautiful than ever; beside Leah, she glowed like a star beside a cloud. In one repressless torrent, the old love surged back to his heart; he forgot the barriers between them; he forgot his cruel, wicked conduct. He only remembered his better nature, and the one knowledge that Florence Merle was still queen of his heart. Would she forgive? Could she forgive him? On his knees he would beg it, and take her to his heart, even if rich Leah Chester, with her hundred thousand, could be his for the asking.

His noble penitence, his manly resolve, lent

a bright glow to his bronze-brown eyes, a warm flush to his cheeks, and he stepped from his shadowed corner to meet his love, even as he emerged from a wrong path to a right.

Florence glanced up; their eyes met—his, eager, penitent, passionate in their love, and she dropped hers, while a blush mounted to her forehead.

"Leah," and she turned to her friend, "you did not tell me you would have company."

"But I am not unwelcome? If you say it, Florence, I will instantly retire, much as I desire to see you, after this long, bitter estrangement."

He spoke presumptuously, impulsively, and Vane Hamilton frowned as he listened.

"I really did not know Mr. Brevoort would be here, Florence, or I should have arranged affairs rather differently. As it is, make the best of it, as Mr. Brevoort seems disposed to do."

Florence turned toward Archy, her voice trembling with agitation.

"You need not retire. Your presence will not annoy me, because—"

"Tell me because I am forgiven—wicked wretch that I am! Florence, can you pardon me? Can you—could you love me again? Oh, Florence, I've been all wrong from first to last; but I see it all now, and I'm determined to appeal to you for mercy."

He had walked close up to her, and was waiting for his answer, his whole attitude one of interest and expectation.

Florence stood with downcast eyes, her form trembling, her cheeks paling, while Leah and Vane looked on, silent and surprised. Suddenly Florence raised her eyes—those beautiful eyes, where forever would linger the haunting shadows Archy Brevoort's hand had placed there, and her calm gaze met his.

"A half-year ago, you knew how truly I loved you; I would have given my very life for you. You refused me then, because I was—poor, Archy."

She did not speak harshly, and when she uttered his name, it thrilled through him in tones of seductive sweetness.

"Yes, yes, Florence; I'll confess it all. I'll acknowledge my baseness—every thing. Only pity me; only love me; only take me back to your heart again, and teach me how to do right. Won't you?—won't you, Florence?"

His eager, pleading tones were almost touching, even to Vane Hamilton.

"I can not, Archy. I refuse you, not because I was Miss Merle, the heiress, when you thought I was simply a music-teacher—not because I own this house and all the Chester estate—not because I allowed my half-sister Leah to call it hers, while I found a man who should love me for myself alone—but, Archy, because I am Vane Hamilton's wife!"

She uttered the words with a tender pride and sweet dignity.

Archy Brevoort listened, like one in a trance; then, as if her low, musical voice dissolved the spell, he moved away, and, with a bow to the hostess, left the house, a cold weight over his heart that time could never melt: the thought of what he had lost and what another had won.

Saturday Talk.

The Sky.—Why is the blue sky so grandly arched above our heads? The ancient Greeks supposed it to be a solid substance, spread above the earth at an immense height, in which the sun, moon and stars were set like diamonds in a ring. The upper surface was laid with gold—the pavement of the gods. In pagan countries somewhat similar notions still prevail. A converted heathen said that he thought the sun, moon and stars were holes in the solid sky, through which came streaming down to earth the brightness and glory of the heavenly world. But, in reality, the sky is nothing more than the air we breathe. Instead of the solid arch, towering so many thousands of miles above us, where our childish fancy put it, the blue sky is nothing but the color of the ocean of air in which we live and move. And, as to the distance from us, it is all within three or four miles. For travelers, who go upon high mountain-tops, tell us that they no longer see any blue sky above them there, where the air is so thin that they pant for breath, but only the blackness of empty space. But, it may be asked, why do we not see the blue color of air when we look up to the ceiling of our rooms? Why do we not have a blue sky in the house as well as out of doors? The answer is that some substances, of which air is one, do not show their color except in the mass. Take a piece of glass, pour upon it a single drop of ink; now press another piece of glass upon the ink, and hold them both pressed together up to the light. Scarcely any color of the ink can be seen. The poet says:

"This distance lends enchantment to the view; And robes the mountain with its azure hue."

But philosophy, that great enemy to poetry, steps up and tells us that it is not the mountain's blue robe which we see, but only the air, which, like a misty curtain, hangs between us and the mountains.

Refined Wit.—A cotemporary declares that a certain eminent man used to be funny in an elegant way, and cites the fun so evoked as something exceptional. All gentlemen, when funny, purvey fun elegantly. They will cover the coarsest joke with the sugar of refinement. It is only the boor who tells a comical story in its broad and literal aspect. Some of the cleverest men in the world have been famous for telling stories most elegantly and acceptably that, by the narration of the vulgar, would be made repulsive. Webster, Clay and other statesmen of their time, made elegant the coarsest narratives; and Fitz Greene Halleck could absolutely convert the slangy facetiae of the streets into language scarcely less than poetry—and keep the point of the thing prominent in its funniest shape at that.

Whistling Girls.—A friend writes us: "Show me a girl who has the hardihood to whistle in these days when every thing natural, even to the very hair of your head is at a discount, and I'll show you a girl who can be depended upon, one who will not fail you in time of need, and will give you the true, hearty grasp, the cordial hand-shake, the warm, genuine welcome—no tip of the kid glove and a cold 'how do you do?' who can brave danger, look toil in the face without shrinking, laugh with those that laugh, and weep with those that weep, as well as whistle with those that whistle; who can, in short, take the world as she finds it, rough and rugged, and not go through life as though she were walking on eggs and afraid of cracking a shell; who deals in substance, not shadow."

Cruiser Crusoe: OR, LIFE ON A TROPIC ISLE.

BY LAFAYETTE LAFOREST.

NUMBER NINE.

WITH an awful scream, the gorilla now flew at me, when Tiger, coming up after chasing the fugitives, caught him by the tail. Frantic with pain, the animal turned upon him, and must have killed him had I not shot his antagonist through the head with my pistol. The huge creature gave one horrid scream, and then fell dead, leaving me master of the field.

I now went at work gathering all the vegetables I could find, which I transported, by means of my box-cart, to my cave. Determined that the rascally apes should not again serve me a trick, I concluded to transfer the best part of the contents of my fields to my home.

This task occupied me a couple of days, and I was much pleased when it was finished.

Next morning, on one of my wanderings, I came upon a beautiful lake, which, girdled by hills covered with shrubbery, had previously escaped my observation. It was in a lovely spot, with flowers and thick shrubbery growing close to the water, which was clear and spotted with shining fish, large and small, disporting through the liquid element.

In the center of the lake there was a small island, which I concluded to visit. To do this, I constructed a raft of some boughs, reeds and withes, thus in two hours framing a light platform which, unwieldy though it was, I doubted not would answer. Stepping upon my raft, provided with a long bough, which would serve me for a pole, I pushed across the clear surface, and soon reached the island.

It was a lovely spot, and I determined at once to here construct a small hut. Nearly the whole of the day was spent in this work, as well as in making a sort of spear, for which I had an especial use, as will soon be shown. The spear cost me much labor, for, to tell the truth, I was a clumsy mechanic.

Toward evening I collected a quantity of resinous sticks for the purpose of making a fire. Having seen nor heard any thing of the savages since I had last reconnoitered their camp, I concluded that they had left the island, and therefore had no hesitation in lighting my sticks. This I did after fastening my raft to a stake near the shore.

The blaze soon became clear and high, lighting the pellucid water so that the sand was visible at the bottom.

I had not long to wait for what I had expected. Attracted by the flame, which they probably "mistook" to be the light of day, the fish came toward my island in such droves that I was enabled to spear as many as I wished. I am afraid that my taste for the sport made me spear more than I really wanted—a species of cruelty which often afterward I regretted. At length, somewhat fatigued, I desisted, and proceeded to broil some of my prey.

The effect of a life spent in a natural way, of early rising and regular rest, of abstinence from all evil indulgences, was clearly visible on me in every way.

I was extremely powerful, could run with the fleetness of a dog, while my appetite was very different from that which is nourished by artificial excitement and destructive pastries and sauces.

Hunger was, truly, my only sauce, and a most satisfactory one it was, too, nothing eatable coming amiss either to myself or my dog.

The presence of this animal was become a great consolation to me, although I often worried myself lest he should be killed or injured by some of the terrible animals infesting the island.

Supper over, and the priming of my carefully-loaded gun examined, I threw myself down and fell asleep in my hut, or house, to awake now and then, with the force of habit, to replenish my fire, which I kept burning as a guard against wild beasts.

A kind of shadow of coming ill was upon my soul. Sleep again visited my eyelids, but I invariably awoke with a start.

Once I fancied I saw a pair of bright eyeballs glaring upon me like live coals through interstices in my bower. They vanished, however, in a moment, as the flickering fire blazed up afresh, leaving me restless and anxious, vainly watching for the return of the vision.

In the morning, having made a hearty meal of the remains of my fish, I returned to my cave.

I had now been nearly one year upon that deserted spot of earth, and though I had many frights, narrow escapes from savages and wild beasts, yet I had much to be thankful for. The island was well supplied with provisions, my herd of gazelles provided the luxury of milk, while my fields of corn and vegetables, despite the devastations of birds and monkeys, had yielded manifold, while no monarch had more choice of residence or sport than myself.

My occupations were varied and sometimes

arduous. Sowing and tilling the ground was, in my rude way, a laborious part of my duties, as habit made all these products of cultivation necessary to my comfort and happiness.

One day I concluded to pay another visit to the beautiful lake, which, since the night-vision that had so alarmed me, I had given a wide berth.

My course was taken, this time, through my large cavern, where I disturbed some ugly-looking bats, but met no more serpents.

As I moved on into the beautiful country beyond, myriads of insects floated in clouds above my head, the feathered minstrels sung in the trees, until my very soul rejoiced with the music and the golden light. I mounted a lofty elevation, and gazed with rapture upon the beautiful scene before me.

Proceeding, I found my raft on the inland lake untouched.

Even the mischievous monkeys had not ventured to assail it. I believed that my attack on them had taught them a certain amount of good-manners.

The lake was as beautiful as ever, though the heat had dried up some of the vegetation. As I sat on my raft, bathing my chafed, hot feet in the clean water, I saw a sleek opossum peering at me from its hiding-place in a hollow tree; then a snake would rustle through the tangled grass, while here and there a grave cockatoo stood sentinel on the high tree-tops.

I paid a visit to my island, where I remained until night, strengthening and improving my hut.

Then, behold me once more upon my raft, engaged in fire-fishing.

I caught a large number of the finny tribe, of which I made a hearty meal.

Next morning I made for the seaboard, where high cliffs would enable me to look out upon the vast expanse of ocean.

My dog, which, as usual, I had brought with me, suddenly stood still, as an animal of some

terrible risk it truly was, for, had the cord parted, I must have been dashed to pieces on the rocks hundreds of feet below.

Cautiously, therefore, I proceeded, my heart fairly quivering with anxiety!

I had nearly gained the summit, when I heard a snapping sound!

With great desperation I threw myself upward, and succeeded in clutching the edge of the cliff.

Quickly I drew myself up, just in time to grasp the rope and pull up Tiger, thus saving him from a horrible death!

By nightfall I succeeded in reaching my cave, in which, after a good supper, I fell fast asleep.

In the morning I resolved to visit my valley of the gazelles, and bring away with me one of the animals to kill for food. I killed, with some regret, the poor creature, which looked sadly at me with its great, soft eyes.

Determined not to be idle, I got many gourds and coconuts, which, sitting under my leafy shelter beside the pool, I fashioned into cups, platters, dishes and bottles.

While at my work, I turned over more and more the idea of capturing some animal, which would enable me to explore my seat of habitation more narrowly, and which might draw some rude kind of car that would easily transport me and some part of my effects to different places. I had made up my mind to catch the elk; but I had never seen him since, nor could I very well imagine how he could be caught.

I knew well how the inhabitants of the African continent managed, but that plan would doubtless be beyond my means.

Besides, it was a useless and cruel waste of life.

To have carried out this mode of capture, I must have constructed two long, high hedges, very far apart at the end, and close together at the other—as if they made the letter V. Where they meet, a narrow lane would have led to a

Taps from Beat Time.

THE TRIUMPH OF GENIUS.

MUCH has been said of the triumph of genius amid the war of antagonistic elements—if you know what they are. Please allow me to show how genius has conquered under misfortunes of all sizes, by a few immortal facts out of my own experience, which I am modestly compelled to tell myself as no one else knows anything about them, or wouldn't have time to tell if they did. Yet I've rocked the cradle with one hand, and with the other written eternal odes amid the squalls of Future Manhood embodied in infantine childhood, and done up in a rag. All this have I done.

I have written heart-burning lyrics inside of a house which was founded of rock, with an extra-sized sieve across the windows, which, though rust had corrupted, served to prevent thieves breaking through and stealing me out.

I have done more than this. I have written metaphysical essays when I hadn't had any thing to drink for three days, and had no money to buy a fresh chew of tobacco, and without even a Brussels carpet in the house, or three overcoats to my back.

I wrote the "Pleasures of Forgetfulness," and "The Man without a Cent," in abbreviated half-minutes between the calls of my creditors:

For in they stept with great agility,
And I received them with fac-ility,
And spake of my debility,
And told them with civility,
That I belonged to the No-bill ity—
They acknowledged my gentility.

My tender and spirit-touching song, beginning:

How sad, how sad it is to see
The loved ones pass away,

was written under very trying circumstances—that is, on the evening of the death of an uncle who had made a very favorable will. It is strange how deeply grief goes.

"Next Week's the Happy Day, Love," was composed the night I got the mitten and had to leave in a muff.

When I lay in the hospital, as moving a spectacle as a bottle of castor-oil, so sick at the stomach that I was obliged to throw up my commission, with nothing to subsist on but a daily allowance of tracts, and without the sublime spirit of resignation which characterized so many of our officers on the eve of a great battle, I composed "Hash; or, The Story of a Thrilling Boarding-House." It proved a success, and of course I was a successor.

I have written enduring advertisements for a soap-factory before I ever had an idea of being President of the United States, and even while I write this never-dying article, I feel that there is a necessity of my making a raise, some way or other, or wife will have to take in washing.

QUICK TAPS.

If I ask you for money to pay that little bit of a bill I owe my washerwoman, and you refuse, I should consider it genuine Bedevillence—O by doze!

Put up with an enemy you can't put down. There is heroism in endurance, if there isn't much satisfaction.

If you are a lover, don't love two girls at once. Love is a good thing, but it's like butter in warm weather—won't do to have too much on hands at a time.

Don't bet. It leads to riches, much misery, and Congress. The man that will bet will be guilty of taking what he wins, and I'll bet the first nine-dollar bill I have no use for on it.

The musketoes, the musketoes,
They visit us in dreams,
They glide above our sleepless lids
Like shadows over streams;
And where the candle-lights of home
In constant luster burn,
The musketoes, the musketoes
Forever will return.

I AM sorry to say that my sight is getting a little treacherous lately. I lately set a carpenter to putting in a new front-door to our house, the former door having been knocked entirely to pieces New Year's Day, by my friends, who called to pay Mrs. Time and the subscriber their respects (those who had any thing else to pay didn't come). A little while ago he came into my study with a bill a size larger than the door, saying the job was done. I went out with him to look at it, when I exclaimed:

"You have not hung the door at all, Mr. Tompkins?"

"Certainly I have, sir," said he.

"What is that large opening there which seems to take up the whole space of the door?" said I.

He told me that was only the KEY-HOLE. I asked him if people down his way used the keyhole as a means of entrance, and told him I thought he made the hole large so as to save lumber; but that I preferred more lumber and less key-hole, as I was not quite as economical as he was.

I finally got him to promise he would come back the next day and hang an extra door on the keyhole.

